

Penalties - Testimony of Jesse Bennett before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee – February 12, 2025, in support of SB 616.

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Jesse Bennett, I am a member of Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates. I am also a Volunteer Research Coordinator for the historic 153-year-old Mount Auburn Cemetery located in the Westport/Mount Winans Community of Baltimore City. Mount Auburn is Baltimore's oldest African American cemetery. We are on the National and Maryland's List of Historic Places.

My duties at Mount Auburn include locating the burial sites of unmarked graves for family members. Often, during the past twelve years, I have engaged in maintenance supervision of landscaping at Mount Auburn Cemetery. We will certainly benefit from the expansion of the penalty definition at our property due to incidents in the past.

In 2000, a group of homeless people built and inhabited a large shed on our property. Our property is currently subject to vandalism of gravesites, damaged fencing, and graffiti, despite NO TRESSPASSING signs posted around our property. We need help to protect our property with stronger legal support.

Please support our Bill SB616.