

THOMAS S. HUTCHINSON
Legislative District 37B
Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot,
and Wicomico Counties



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 308
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3582 · 301-858-3582
800-492-7122 Ext. 3582
Tom.Hutchinson@house.state.md.us

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Public Health and
Minority Health Disparities

Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 616 - Criminal Law - Destroying Funerary Objects - Statute of Limitations and Prohibitions

Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, February 11th, 2025

Why We Need This Bill

Many families in the state of Maryland bury their deceased loved ones on the property of their homes. When these homes are sold, new homeowners do not always maintain these graves or cemeteries, and sometimes damage these grounds without the previous family's knowledge. When families return to visit these sites, they discover the desecration and seek justice for the damages. However, they can only seek legal action if the desecration occurred within the previous year. Current Maryland law notes that the statute of limitations period starts when the violation is committed, not when it is discovered, per the Assistant AG's opinion (attached).

Last year, we testified on HB 593, which increased the statute of limitations for the removal, desecration, damage, or destruction of funerary objects from one year to five years when discovered. We are resubmitting that bill as **HB 616**, which *extends the statute of limitations* for the removal, desecration, damage, or destruction of funerary objects *from one year to three years when discovered*. While this is intended to help families or private cemeteries and burial sites, it also extends to public cemeteries or burial sites. Instead of only having one year to discover the damages and to prosecute, families will have more time to seek legal action for funerary object desecration.

Too many families have found the bodies of their loved ones removed, their gravestones damaged or destroyed, and the grounds on which they rest ruined beyond recognition. Cemetery owners are being left with costly damages and desecrations to the grounds in which people have gone to mourn for their lost loved ones. It's imperative that we hold desecrators accountable for these unholy acts and we protect those that rest.

I respectfully ask the Committee for a favorable vote on **HB 616**.