

Sales, Transfers, Acquisition for an Alternate Use

HB0892

Testimony of Yvonne Fisher

Economic Matters

I am a member of the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates (MCLA). Our group has extensive experience with cemetery issues.

I have also been a member of the Advisory Council for the Office of Cemetery Oversight (ACCO) for 9 years. My testimony today is **not as a representative** of the ACCO.

The Acquisitions, Sales and transfers of Cemeteries should have a more strict and procedural processes that must be documented and approved by the **Office of Cemetery Oversight**. There are no regulations or legal requirements to assure that this process does not leave room for abuses and illegal use of a cemetery. This also does not assure notification of to all descendants of the entered.

Case in point, if you purchase a cemetery that has large amount of land that appears to be unused that land will require to have an ecological, ground penetrating and or other types of surveys to assure that there are no burials there before ground can be disturbed or a structure can be erected.

Purchasing an existing Cemetery with structures presently on the property should also be required to preform ground penetrating surveys. This should occur to assure that the structure was not built on a part of the original cemetery grounds.

There should be a requirement that the **current owner/s** or **purchasers** must inform every family of the loved one/s that are interred in the cemetery of **all** proposed sale or transfers of ownership and or construction. This will give the families time to make inquiries and obtain information about the new proprietors and their proposed changes to the cemetery. If there are any.

It is to the benefit of everyone in the State of Maryland to be assured that their loved ones are protected from any form of abuse and or neglect that may result by the sale or transfer that has not been communicated to them. If there are no legal procedures this could possibly result in situations that would negatively affect the families of those individuals that are interred.

No one thinks about their last resting place daily, but we do think about our loved ones and their last resting place. Those individuals are not here to protect themselves, so it is imperative that we protect their last resting place by assuring that there are legal requirements and procedures that will ultimately protect them of any changes in the use of the land where they are now laid to rest.

We must assure that there are procedures and processes are in place for not only those who have passed away and are now interned in a cemetery but for all of us who someday will be in that position.

The industry of buying and selling cemeteries that may or may not have registered owners will continue to evolve. As citizens of the State of Maryland, it is our responsibility to assure that the laws and regulations proposed are focused on those who are among the living but we also must be the protectors for those who are not able to protect themselves.