

HB0892 cross-filed with SB233- Cemeteries-Actions for Sale, Transfer, or Alternate Use-
FAVORABLE

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This bill strengthens Maryland’s existing cemetery law by creating a clear, fair process that holds cemetery property owners accountable. It ensures that before a cemetery—or even a portion of one—can be sold or repurposed, descendants have a meaningful voice in the final disposition of their loved ones. And when disputes arise, it gives the courts the authority to resolve them. I support this version of the House bill rather than the amended version of SB233 since I believe the courts would offer stronger protections than the Office of Cemetery Oversight.

This bill offers a viable solution. It clearly defines who may bring an action, who carries the burden of proof, and what steps must be followed before any cemetery land can be altered or sold. It protects families, it protects history, and it prevents exactly the kind of abuses we are still seeing today, many of which were instigated by the Catholic church in particular.

I’ve spent many years researching cemetery issues and consulting with families and communities across Maryland. The problems we often think of as “historic” are still happening today. Cemeteries have been built over. Burials have been dug up and discarded. Families have been left powerless.

Laurel Hill Cemetery in Baltimore once held thousands of African American burials. Only a few hundred were actually moved to Carroll County. The rest now lie beneath a strip-mall parking lot. That is the cost of unclear laws and lack of oversight.

But this is not just the past repeating itself—it is happening today. At a Howard County cemetery, the current property owner has deliberately removed memorials and human remains without notifying lot owners or descendants. Families have tried to reach the owner without success. Two Maryland funeral homes refused to remove the burials before he found a third company to do the work. The state’s attorney approved the process with no meaningful oversight. Now, the developer plans to build a carwash and convenience store on the front third of the existing cemetery.

With the right legal framework, descendants and communities can reclaim and protect these sacred places. This bill provides clarity, accountability, and dignity for the people buried in these cemeteries and for the families who care deeply about them.

I urge you to vote favorably on this bill.