

Health and Economic Matters Committees House Bill 892 Hearing February 25, 2026
Cross-filed with SB 233 Position: FAVORABLE

Business Regulation -- Cemeteries -- Actions for Sale, Transfer, or Alternate Use

Montgomery Preservation is a county-wide nonprofit that has for decades worked with local and state groups to advocate for cemeteries through new state laws. MPI led the project to identify every cemetery in Montgomery County and to pass local laws to protect them. In 2021-2, I served on the committee charged by House & Senate Joint Chairmen to survey citizens and study historic African American cemeteries in Maryland and recommend strategies to improve their current situations and their futures. This report noted that many properties in every county meet the definition of Abandoned because owners are unknown or missing, and others suffer from neglect or outright abuse.

Some good Maryland laws have been enacted in recent sessions -- combining forces for a State-wide list and defining the term Abandoned. The Cemetery Inventory Database workgroup delivered its report to the General Assembly on December 1, 2025; it contains excellent recommendations for implementation. This year we bring other urgent needs to your attention, with suggestions for solving persistent problems.

Helping Abandoned cemeteries is a high priority. In every corner of our State, over the years, churches closed, the congregation aged out or moved away, and the cemetery was neglected. Burial records were lost and corporate requirements were unattended to. Families sold their farms, and developers did not honor the little enclosures on the hill. Historically, many have been dismissed as unimportant and intentionally mistreated. African American cemeteries are sadly over-represented in these instances.

MPI requests your support for 2 proposals that will have a beneficial effect on all Maryland cemeteries. **HB 892** describes what should happen when cemeteries are sold, transferred, or the property turned to another use. It provides a voice to descendants and others who respect those who came before us. **HB 893** provides a reasonable pathway for jurisdictions to resolve ownership problems should they decide to take advantage of it and for willing descendants and nonprofits to uplift Abandoned cemeteries.

These bills address issues that have long been identified and will help descendants, communities, landowners, and local governments to begin resolving pressing issues. Enacting these bills will begin to address long-standing problems that exist in every Maryland county and municipality.

In recent years, we've been pleased to watch increased understanding in the General Assembly about the protection and preservation of our state's noteworthy and precious cemeteries. When supported in committee, most cemetery protection proposals have passed unanimously. We hope you will continue this commitment progress toward resolving problems that have been building for years and impact all segments and Maryland populations.

Thank you for your support.

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