

## Testimony for Cemetary Bills.

### Protecting Cemeteries from Desecration

I am Molly Carr, of Cabin John, MD, a lifelong resident of Montgomery County Maryland.

I am a member of the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition (BACC) and I support HB 892 because this bill, if it were to become law, would help protect historic African American cemeteries by establishing the right of descendant communities to go to court in Maryland if they believe their cemeteries are being desecrated. I also support HB 893 because this bill, future law, would help protect abandoned cemeteries from being desecrated as well. For this bill, HB 893, I am requesting an amendment requiring a Maryland judge to make a decision regarding any case brought before the Maryland courts by a descendant community.

The reason I am testifying in support of Cemetery protection from desecration in Maryland is as follows. I am in my 60's now and have lived here more than ½ a century, born during the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King was alive and at his prime, working for racial justice, when I was born. Desegregation was in process then and was occurring in my neighborhood schools. I grew up right off of Wisconsin Ave, the road taken by President Lincoln in and out of Washington DC. This road was taken by Union Solidiers black and white to sacrifice their lives for a more just society, one that was to attempting to live up to the Ideals and Values articulated in the U.S. Constitution. I now live right off of River Road, where I recently found out about two very different historical realities in the 1800's. Maryland was a slave state until the end of the Civil War but Washington, DC was a place of sanctuary and safety for people of African descent to flee the brutality of slavery pre-civil war and during and after. Tenleytown in DC due to its U.S. military fort was a place where they could live in safety. However, River Road which "dead ends" into Wisconsin Ave, just down the hill from Tenleytown, just beyond the DC border was a community of African descent that was mostly enslaved, and there were 4 large plantations. There was a "bottom lands area" where the people of African descent were buried for at least 150 years. The people of European descent were buried up on higher ground. This "bottom lands area" was divided up into 5 parcels and sold without protection of the law to monied interests who industrialized these parcels and in the process paved it over in the 1960's despite there being very clear evidence and presence of a African Cemetary called Moses. Do I need to say that this desecration violates the Ideals and Values of the United States Constitution and our common humanitarian values of loving and honoring all people during their lives and deaths? Many of the people buried in Moses African Cemetery suffered

profoundly in life, the least we can do now is honor their humanity and return to our humanitarian values now in 2026 by restoring this sacred cemetery and create laws that prevent this from ever happening again. How many industrialized zones in Maryland were created to cover up a dark past to bring profit to those who are of the 'monied class'? Is this how we want to proceed forward into the future? Putting money and the accumulation of wealth at the expense of humanitarian values? With climate change looming, if we care about the long view of self-preservation and the preservation of humanity, we can't afford to do this any longer.

Now I mentioned two different historical realities off River Road. The other is of the Community of Gibson Grove, in Cabin John, MD where there is another cemetery associated with Moses Tabernacle off of Seven Locks Road. This community was founded after the Civil War and was able to own land and establish a church and a graveyard that was maintained and not wrongfully sold and industrialized. It was partially desecrated and paved over by the Washington beltway in the 1960's, however. Because this cemetery land was never sold and never abandoned, it had a very different fate than the fate of Moses African Cemetery on River Road. It is being restored, and the Gibson Grove Community and its descendants are being honored. This is a story of repair and possibility for recognizing wrongs of the past, but also remembering that this is our shared story, whether we come from European Colonial privilege or African Colonial enslavement. Going forward we need to recognize our common humanity; and uphold the Ideals and Values of United States Constitution of Liberty, and Justice for all. Please support the Cemetery Bills with the language that protects the sacred, burial grounds of ALL people including but not limited to European, African, Asian, Arab, Hispanic and Native American.

Thank you again for considering my testimony on this very important matter to All Marylanders here now, here in the past and for those Marylanders of the future.