



February 23, 2026

Dear Chairs Kriselda Valderrama and Heather Bagnall:

The Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates (MCLA) ask for your support of HB893.

1. The role of the court for condemning a cemetery with no known owner is laid out in Court rule 12-204. This bill is not about neglected cemeteries, religious cemeteries, or any other cemetery that has no owner.
2. Our bill provides that governmental entities may initiate the condemnation process.
3. Governmental entity is clearly defined in existing law
4. The goal of this process is to maintain and preserve the cemetery, preferably by a descendant group or a non-profit.
5. We anticipate that organizations that want to care for an ownerless cemetery will approach a government entity to cooperatively work to transfer ownership.

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) misunderstands this bill when it states that the bill addresses “neglected burial sites.” To the contrary, HB893 only addresses cemeteries where there is no owner. The bill does not mention, nor does it impact, cemeteries that are neglected.

MCC lists three reasons the bill “raises serious religious liberty concerns”. Yet each of the three arguments they make are negated by the fact that this bill only addresses cemeteries with no known owner.

MCC goes on to discuss challenges to parish-owned cemeteries. Again, the bill only addresses cemeteries with no known owner.

MCC asserts that cemeteries that are “quiet or historic” are covered by this bill. They are not.

Descendant groups, scouts and others that want to help, need owner permission to go on the land. HB893 provides a way to establish ownership.

Please support HB893

David Zinner for the MCLA