



February 23, 2026

Dear Chairs Kriselda Valderrama and Heather Bagnall:

The Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates (MCLA) ask for your support of HB892.

1. The bill clarifies the role of the court to pass a judgement when a cemetery owner proposes selling or transferring a cemetery for a non-cemetery use. The basics of the process are already enshrined in article 5-505.
2. The bill adds critical protections for the rights of descendants.
3. We believe it is important that relatives of those buried in a cemetery should “have a seat at the table” when a cemetery where their loved ones are buried is going to be sold or transferred for another use.
4. We anticipate that the protections and rights in our bill will lead to discussion, possible mediation, and hopefully an equitable resolution.

Opposition to this bill by the Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is confusing. On one hand the MCC writes that “a cemetery is sacred ground, blessed for the reverent care of the dead and for the spiritual needs of the living.”

At the same time they oppose a bill that protects cemeteries and those buried in them.

The MCC writes that “Cemeteries are not interchangeable parcels of land. For Catholics, they are holy places entrusted to our care, deserving of permanence and protection.”

Yet in my oral testimony I will describe at least 14 Catholic-owned

Maryland cemeteries that were sold, closed, built on, or razed between 1816 and 1986.

HB892 does not infringe upon the rights of religious organizations. It does not regulate doctrine, compel disinterment, or force alternate uses. It does not threaten religious autonomy or impose undue burdens on sacred grounds

Rather, HB892 introduces certainty through due process. It ensures that any proposal to alter a cemetery's use must justify itself against the interests of those buried there and their communities. Rather than weakening the sacred character of burial grounds, the bill strengthens and safeguards them.

The Maryland Catholic Conference is wrong in their reasoning that underlies their opposition to this bill. HB892 protects the sacredness of cemetery burials.

Please support HB892.

David Zinner for the MCLA