

Abandoned Cemeteries- Acquisition

HB0893 – Testimony of Yvonne Fisher for Judicial Proceedings- Economic Matters

I am a member of the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates (MCLA). Our group has extensive experience with cemetery issues.

I have also been a member of the Advisory Council for the Office of Cemetery Oversight (ACCO) for 9 years. My testimony today is not as a representative of the council.

Sales and transfers of Cemeteries should have a more strict and procedural process that must be documented and approved by the department of Cemetery Oversight. There are no regulations of legal requirements to assure that this process does not leave room for abuses and illegal use of a cemetery.

There should be a **requirement** that research has been done to assure that there is no **viable** owner/s of a cemetery and inform every family whose loved one is **interred** in **that cemetery** of **all proposed new ownership and possible new use**. This will give the families time to make inquiries and obtain information about the new proprietors.

It is to the benefit of everyone in the State of Maryland to be assured that their loved ones are protected from any form of abuse and neglect that may be a result of a **sale** or **transfer** that has not been communicated to them. If there is no legal procedure this could possibly result in situations that would negatively affect the families of those individuals that are interred.

There must be notification to all the families of those **interred** in the cemetery of the proposed sale within **a period of time** that will allow them to **investigate** disinterment to another cemetery or other wishes that the

families may have. We must always remember that in **life** or in **death** we should be mindful of the respect that we give particularly to those who are unable to protect themselves.

No one thinks about their last resting place daily, but we do think about our loved ones and their last resting place. Those individuals are not here to protect themselves, so it is imperative that we protect their last resting place by assuring that there are legal requirements and procedures that will protect them.

We must assure that there are procedures and processes in place for not only those who have passed away and are now interred in a cemetery but for all of us who someday will be in that position.

We must be the protectors for those who are not able to protect themselves.