

**JOHNNY RAY SALLING**  
*Legislative District 6*  
Baltimore County

Budget and Taxation Committee  
Public Safety, Transportation,  
and Environment Subcommittee



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 321  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3587 · 301-858-3587  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3587  
JohnnyRay.Salling@senate.state.md.us

## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Senate Finance Committee  
Chair Pamela Beidle  
Vice Chair Antonio Hayes  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 234 - Business Regulation - Abandoned Cemeteries - Acquisition and Disposition. This legislation addresses a real and growing problem in Maryland: abandoned cemeteries. Across our state, there are burial grounds that no longer have a legal owner because corporations dissolved, churches closed, or records were lost over time. These cemeteries often fall into disrepair, become targets for vandalism, or are simply forgotten.

Right now, Maryland law does not provide a clear legal framework to place these abandoned cemeteries into responsible hands. As a result, families, neighbors, and local governments are often powerless to act, even when they want to protect these sites.

This bill creates a clear and respectful solution by allowing state and local governments to acquire abandoned cemeteries through lawful means, such as donation or purchase. Before any transfer occurs, the bill requires reasonable efforts to identify and notify descendants. Once acquired, ownership may be transferred to descendants, community organizations, or nonprofit groups that are willing and able to care for the cemetery.

The bill also sets clear expectations. New owners must maintain, preserve, and protect the cemetery. If there are disputes or complications, courts can provide oversight. In rare cases where reinterment is necessary, the bill requires that it be done professionally and respectfully. This bill is not about taking property. It is about stewardship. It ensures that burial sites are treated with dignity and placed in the hands of people committed to their long-term care.

By passing this bill, Maryland can prevent neglect, protect human remains, and preserve our shared history. I ask for a favorable committee report.

Sincerely,

Senator Johnny Ray Salling