



Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States and  
Humane Society International

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**March 24, 2026**

**Finance Committee  
HB564 - Pet Cremation and Burial Services Consumer Protection Act  
FAVORABLE**

Humane World for Animals respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of House Bill 564, legislation that will bring oversight, accountability, and transparency to Maryland's pet cremation industry.

For millions of Maryland families, pets are cherished companions whose loss brings profound grief. When families entrust a cremation provider with their animal's remains, they expect dignity, respect, and honesty. [Recent events in Baltimore](#) have shown that without regulation, this trust can be deeply violated.

**A Crisis of Trust: The Baltimore Pet Crematorium Scandal**

Over the past year, Maryland families have been devastated by revelations that a [Catonsville cremation](#) business engaged in widespread fraud. Multiple investigations found that grieving pet owners were frequently given containers filled with sand, gravel, fertilizer, baking soda, flour, or concrete instead of their pets' ashes. Some families received these materials in inappropriate packaging such as plastic baggies, which immediately raised suspicion.

The situation became even more alarming as investigators uncovered the bodies of at least 38 animals decomposing inside a hearse on the business owners' property, along with other remains discarded along Maryland roads. More than 50–60 pet owners have come forward, some of whom you will hear from during the hearing on HB564, others who submitted written testimony, and law enforcement reports that the business was operating without the required licenses or oversight.

The heartbreak of learning that the remains they received were not their beloved companions is not something any Marylander should face. Many learned only later, sometimes from animal control officers like Officer Miles Hughes, testifying in person at the HB564 hearing, that their pets' bodies had been abandoned rather than cremated.



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These cases represent not just fraud, but a profound betrayal of grieving families and a complete disregard for the dignity of deceased companion animals.

### **Why HB 564 Is Essential**

House Bill 564 directly addresses the regulatory gaps that enabled these abuses:

#### **1. Establishes Licensing and Standards**

Maryland currently lacks uniform standards for pet cremation providers. HB 564 ensures that only qualified, inspected, and accountable operators perform this sensitive and emotionally significant service.

#### **2. Prevents Fraud and Consumer Deception**

By requiring documentation, clear processes, and traceable chain-of-custody procedures, HB 564 protects families from receiving false remains, [which occurred repeatedly](#) under the unregulated system – one such operation was discovered but we have no idea how often similar operations may be occurring.

#### **3. Ensures Humane Handling of Animal Remains**

The discovery of dozens of animal bodies improperly stored or dumped shows the urgent need for legal requirements to ensure dignity for animals even after death.

#### **4. Protects Grieving Maryland Families**

No family should ever endure the pain of believing they have laid their companion to rest only to discover they have been deceived. HB 564 provides the basic consumer protections they deserve.

### **The Scandal Demonstrates the Need for Reform**

This bill simply puts pet crematory best practices into law so to protect our citizens. Many have expressed that while additional oversight may impose obligations, it is essential to prevent future tragedies and restore public trust. Meaningful legislation is the only way to ensure these abuses are never repeated.

The Baltimore pet crematorium scandal makes clear that Maryland must act. Without regulation, grieving families can be exploited, and animals can be mistreated even after death.

House Bill 564 is a compassionate, commonsense measure that will protect pets, support Maryland families, and restore accountability in an industry that is relied upon during life's most difficult moments.



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**Humane World for Animals urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 564.**

Humanely Yours,

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