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Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation,
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Senate Finance Committee
Chair Pamela Beidle
Vice Chair Antonio Hayes
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
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Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 233 – Business Regulation - Cemeteries - Actions for Sale, Transfer, or Alternate Use.

Cemeteries are not ordinary pieces of land. They are places of remembrance, history, and deep personal meaning. Yet under current law, there is no clear process to ensure that descendant families or communities have a voice when cemetery land is proposed for sale, transfer, or redevelopment.

This bill fills that gap by requiring that any proposed sale, transfer, or repurposing of cemetery land be reviewed by a court. That review includes input from people with burial rights, descendant community organizations, nonprofit preservation groups, and government entities. This ensures that all affected voices are heard.

The bill gives courts flexibility. A court may approve a proposed transfer, deny it, or require an alternative approach that better protects the cemetery. If a sale is approved, the bill requires that proceeds first be used to cover reinterment costs or cemetery preservation. Any remaining funds must be distributed fairly.

In cases where a sale is inappropriate, the court may approve a transfer of the cemetery to a nonprofit or descendant organization for little or no cost. The court may also help parties negotiate a solution that respects both legal and community interests.

This bill ensures that decisions involving burial grounds are made carefully, transparently, and with respect for the people connected to those sites. At its core, this legislation protects dignity, history, and fairness. I request a favorable committee report.

Sincerely,

Senator Johnny Ray Salling