

Testimony in Support

House Bill 677

Reduction Facilities and Veterans Service Organizations - Hydrolyzed and Soil Remains - Immunity

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee. My name is The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross. I am a United States Air Force veteran and a municipal public servant who has dedicated more than three decades to service in uniform and in community leadership. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 677. At its core, this legislation addresses a matter of dignity, responsibility, and respect for those who have served our nation. Veterans do not stop deserving honor when their service ends, and that obligation does not end at death. When the remains of a veteran or an eligible dependent go unclaimed, the State has both a moral and civic duty to ensure that disposition occurs with care and reverence. House Bill 677 provides reasonable legal protection to registered reduction operators and veterans service organizations acting in good faith when assisting with the disposition of unclaimed hydrolyzed or soil remains. These organizations often step forward not for profit, but out of commitment to service, remembrance, and national gratitude. Without clarity in law, well intentioned organizations may hesitate to assist due to fear of civil liability. This bill removes that barrier while maintaining accountability through the requirement of good faith action. As someone who has served alongside men and women who placed mission before self, I understand deeply the importance of ensuring that no veteran is forgotten. Veterans service organizations across Maryland already carry significant responsibility in supporting burial honors, family outreach, and memorial services. Providing them appropriate legal protection enables them to continue this work without unnecessary legal exposure. This legislation also reflects evolving practices related to natural organic reduction while ensuring that veterans are treated with the same respect regardless of the method of disposition. The bill does not diminish standards. Instead, it aligns law with modern practices while preserving dignity and oversight. Maryland has long demonstrated leadership in how we care for our veterans and their families. House Bill 677 continues that tradition by strengthening cooperation between licensed operators and trusted veterans organizations so that unclaimed remains are handled responsibly and respectfully. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 677.

Respectfully submitted, The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross United States Air Force
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