



## House Bill 235

### *Abandoned Private Cemeteries – Repair or Maintenance by County or Municipality*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: February 7, 2017

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 235 as it provides local governments assistance in preserving blighted abandoned cemeteries.

HB 235 authorizes local governments to enact a local law allowing a lien to be set on abandoned private cemeteries for unpaid maintenance, repair, or preservation work performed by the government on the property. The government must first notify the owner and request permission before performing any work.

Under current law, there is no mechanism for local governments to recoup the costs for these services from the owner of the cemetery. Local governments that would like to remedy or restore abandoned private cemeteries may only raise money to perform the services themselves, or rely on charitable organizations and community service volunteers. This bill creates a mechanism for local governments to offset the costs associated with preserving these abandoned properties while ensuring that the owner of the property is also invested.

Local governments share interest in maintaining the integrity of burial sites within their communities, many of which have historical or cultural significance. This bill helps provide a means for local governments to afford this upkeep when merited. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 235.