

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 22, 2022

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing millions of individuals and supporters across the country, we express our strong support for S. 3667, the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act.

If enacted, this important legislation would authorize the National Park Service to establish a grant program, in coordination with governmental, private, and non-profit partners, to assist communities across our country in identifying, preserving, and restoring these historic and cultural sites.

Cemeteries are places of tribute and memory, connecting communities with their past. Unfortunately, many African-American burial grounds from both before and after the Civil War are in a state of disarray or inaccessibility. Beginning with slavery and continuing through the Jim Crow era, African-Americans were restricted in where they could bury their dead. Local laws segregated burial grounds by race. These sites were often confined to remote areas or marginal property, and they frequently were not provided the same sort of state or local support or assistance as predominantly white cemeteries. As a result, many jurisdictions are unaware of the existence of these historic sites. Even when their location is known, the task of restoring, preserving, and maintaining these burial grounds can be expensive, difficult, and require technical expertise.

Our organizations have witnessed first-hand the need for federal leadership to protect and preserve these important historic and cultural landmarks. The African-American Burial Grounds Preservation Program would help to re-discover the existence of burial grounds ahead of commercial development, avoiding disturbances which create heartache in communities and development delays. It will aid family members, descendants, and community members in honoring and remembering their shared past. Preserving and protecting these sacred sites, and the stories they tell, is an integral part of our American heritage.

The African-American Burial Grounds Preservation Act will help preserve our shared history while also better informing development decisions and community planning.

Sincerely,

National and Regional Organizations:
Afro-American Historical and Genealogical
Society
Archaeological Institute of America
American Anthropological Association
American Battlefield Trust
American History Press

Coalition for American Heritage
Fearnbach History Services
National Parks Conservation Association
The National Trust for Historic Preservation
New South Associates
Preservation Action
Sierra Club

Society of Black Archaeologists
Society for Historical Archaeology
United Negro College Fund

Alabama:

The Movement 46
The Ridge Macon County Archaeology Project
Tuskegee Macon County Community
Foundation, Inc.

Arkansas:

Afro-American Historical & Genealogical
Society, Arkansas Chapter
Black Cemeteries Uncovered/African American
Funeral Homes "The Final Emancipation"
Macedonia Baptist Cemetery & Church
Preservation Project
Northwest Arkansas African American
Heritage Association
Preservation African American Cemeteries,
Inc.
(PAAC) Preservation African American
Cemeteries Junior Preservation Society
Preserve Arkansas

California:

Save Our Heritage Organisation

Florida:

African American Burial Ground Project at
University of South Florida
African American Cemetery Alliance of Tampa
Bay
Black Cemetery Network
Florida International University
Florida Public Archaeology Network
Whispering Souls African American Cemetery

Georgia:

Bethlehem Cemetery Society
Friends of Brooklyn Cemetery

Kentucky:

Association of Black Anthropologists

Maryland:

The Board of Trustees of Morningstar
Tabernacle Number 88, Inc.
Broadneck African - American Heritage Project
Cabin John Citizens Association
Carderock Springs Citizens Association

Friends of Moses Hall
Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project
Maryland Commission on African American
History and Culture
Preservation Maryland

Massachusetts:

We Capture Carbon

Michigan:

Abre Croche Cultural Resources LLC
Michigan Historic Preservation Network
Preservation Detroit

Minnesota:

Council for Minnesota Archaeology

Missouri:

Family and Friends of Shady Grove
City of Weston, Historic Preservation
Commission
Missouri Preservation
Washington Park Cemetery - Anti-Desecration
League

New Jersey:

Afro American Historical and Genealogical
Society, Inc- NJ Chapter
Pennington African Cemetery Association

New York:

Brooklyn Level Up
Brooklyn Queens Land Trust
Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Society
Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition
The Good Life Garden
Made With Love, DUH! LLC
Q Gardens

North Carolina:

Afro-American Historical & Genealogical
Society Charlotte Chapter
City of Durham
Preservation North Carolina
River Jordan Council on African American
Heritage
University of North Carolina System

Ohio:

Columbus Landmarks Foundation
Heritage Ohio
Ohio History Connection

Pennsylvania:

Friends of Midland
Pennsylvania Archaeological Council
Pennsylvania Hallowed Grounds
Philadelphia Archaeological Forum

Tennessee:

Baskerville Memorial Cemetery Association
(BMCA)

Texas:

Afro-American Genealogy and Historical
Society Willie Lee Gay H-Town Chapter
Convict Leasing and Labor Project
San Antonio African American Community
Archive and Museum
Texas Freedom Colonies Project

Vermont:

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office

Virginia:

Afro-American Genealogy and Historical
Society, Greater Richmond
Alexandria Branch, National Association for
the Advancement of Colored People
AMMD Pine Grove Project
City of Roanoke
Enrichmond
Friends of Fairview
Hidden in Plain Site
Historic Richmond
Historic Staunton Foundation
Josephine School Community Museum
Preservation Piedmont
Preservation Virginia
Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery
Racial Justice Alexandria
Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation
Sacred Grounds Project
Shenandoah Valley Black History Project
Southside African American Cemetery
Preservation Society
Staunton Augusta County African American
Research Society
Virginia Roots

Washington:

Washington Trust for Historic Preservation

Washington, District of Columbia:

African American Heritage Preservation
Foundation, Inc.
Archaeology in the Community