

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and  
Public Lands  
1328 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Don Young  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and  
Public Lands  
1328 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

June 26, 2019

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, Chairman Haaland, and Ranking Member Young:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing millions of individuals and supporters across the country, we express our strong support for H.R. 1179, the bipartisan African-American Burial Grounds Network Act.

If enacted, this important legislation would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to establish a voluntary, nationwide network of African-American burial grounds. The legislation would also create an NPS 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. H.R. 1179 is modeled after the two other successful voluntary networks NPS currently manages, "We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement" and "The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program."

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 action to protect and preserve these important historic and cultural landmarks. By creating a national network, the African-American Burial Grounds Network Act would help to re-discover the existence of burial grounds ahead of commercial development, helping to avoid disturbances which create distress and heartache in communities. It would also ensure that family members and descendants of those interred are able to visit these sites to honor and remember their ancestors. Preserving and protecting these sacred sites, and the stories they tell, is an integral part of our American heritage.

The African-American Burial Grounds Network Act will help preserve our shared history while also better informing development decisions and community planning. For more information, or if you would like to become a cosponsor, please contact Katherine Stewart ([Katherine.Stewart@mail.house.gov](mailto:Katherine.Stewart@mail.house.gov)) with Rep. Adams, Blair Wriston ([Blair.Wriston@mail.house.gov](mailto:Blair.Wriston@mail.house.gov)) with Rep. McEachin, or Alex Vargo

([Alex.Vargo@mail.house.gov](mailto:Alex.Vargo@mail.house.gov)) with Rep. Budd.

Sincerely,

### **National/Regional Organizations**

African Archaeological Review  
Afro American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc.  
American Anthropological Association  
American Battlefield Trust  
American Cultural Resources Association  
Archaeological Institute of America  
Association for the Study of African American Life and History  
Coalition for American Heritage  
Coming to the Table LLC  
Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology  
Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission  
National Council on Public History  
National Parks Conservation Association  
The National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Preservation Action  
Society for American Archaeology  
Society of Black Archaeologists  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
United Negro College Fund  
United States Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites  
The Wilderness Society

### **Alabama**

Alabama Archaeological Society  
The Birmingham African American Genealogy Group Inc.  
Shadow Lawn Memorial Gardens Maintenance & Perpetual Care Association (Birmingham)

### **Arkansas**

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Arkansas Chapter  
Northwest Arkansas African American Heritage Association  
Preserve Arkansas  
Preserving African American Cemeteries  
Preserving African American Cemeteries Junior Preservation Society

### **California**

California Preservation Foundation

Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO)  
Society for California Archaeology

### **Colorado**

Black Genealogy Research Group

### **Florida**

Florida Anthropological Society

### **Idaho**

Idaho Archaeological Society

### **Illinois**

Illinois Archaeological Survey

### **Louisiana**

River Road African American Museum  
River Road African American Burial Grounds Coalition

### **Maryland**

Preservation Maryland

### **Michigan**

Abre Croche Cultural Resources, LLC

### **New York**

Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Preservation Society

### **New Jersey**

Archaeological Society of New Jersey  
Down Jersey Heritage Research, LLC  
New Jersey Historic Trust  
The North New Jersey History and Genealogy Center, Morristown, NJ

### **North Carolina**

The Charlotte Museum of History  
The Charlotte Regional History Consortium  
Preservation North Carolina  
University of North Carolina System  
Wake Forest Historical Museum

**Ohio**

Columbus Landmarks  
Heritage Ohio  
Ohio Archaeological Council  
Ohio State Historic Preservation Office  
Preserving Ohio's Cemeteries  
Second Baptist Church, Columbus, Heritage  
Committee  
Upper Arlington Historical Society

**Oklahoma**

Black Genealogy Research Group of Oklahoma  
The Coltrane Group

**Pennsylvania**

Friends of Midland  
Pennsylvania Archaeological Council  
Pennsylvania Hallowed Ground Project

**South Carolina**

Gullah Society

**Texas**

Texas Ten Historical Society

**Utah**

Preservation Utah

**Vermont**

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

**Virginia**

African American Historical Society of  
Portsmouth  
Corhaven Graveyard (Shenandoah), a ministry  
of Coracle  
Council of Virginia Archaeologists  
Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC  
Ebenezer Baptist Church, Virginia Beach  
Enrichmond Foundation  
Fairfield Foundation  
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond  
Friends of Buckingham  
Resurrecting History, Davis Burke Enterprises  
(Hampton)  
The Lemon Project: A Journey of Reconciliation,  
College of William and Mary  
Preservation Piedmont

The Preservers of the Daughters of Zion  
Cemetery (Charlottesville)  
Virginia Outdoors Foundation

**Washington, D.C.**

Mt Zion-Female Union Band Society Historic  
Memorial Park Foundation