

November 12, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Manchin:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing individuals and supporters across the country, we express our strong support for S 2827, a bill to establish within the National Park Service the African-American Burial Grounds Network.

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.

We respectfully urge you to pass S 2827 as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

**National/Regional Organizations**  
Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society  
American Anthropological Association  
American Cultural Resources Association

Archaeological Institute of America  
Association for Black Anthropologists  
Association for the Study of African American Life and History  
Coalition for American Heritage

Coming to the Table

Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology  
National Alliance of Faith and Justice  
National Council on Public History  
National Parks Conservation Association  
The National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Preservation Action  
Sierra Club  
Society for American Archaeology  
Society of Black Archaeologists  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
US/ICOMOS

#### **Alabama**

Shadow Lawn Memorial Gardens Maintenance  
& Perpetual Care Association, Inc.

#### **Arkansas**

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical  
Society-Arkansas Chapter  
Preservation of African American Cemeteries  
Preserving African American Cemeteries Junior  
Preservation Society  
Preserve Arkansas

#### **California**

Save Our Heritage Organisation  
Society for California Archaeology

#### **Florida**

Florida Public Archaeology Network

#### **Georgia**

Georgia African American Historic Preservation  
Network

#### **Illinois**

Illinois Archaeological Society

#### **Louisiana**

River Road African American Museum  
River Road African Burial Grounds Coalition

#### **Michigan**

Arbre Croche Cultural Resources LLC

#### **Maryland**

Preservation Maryland

#### **New Jersey**

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

#### **New York**

Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Preservation  
Society, Inc.

#### **North Carolina**

North Carolina Museums Council  
The University of North Carolina System  
Wake Forest College Birthplace Society  
Wake Forest Historical Association  
Wake Forest Historical Museum

#### **Ohio**

Columbus Landmarks Foundation  
Green Lawn Cemetery Association of Franklin  
County, Ohio  
Heritage Ohio  
Ohio Archaeological Council  
Ohio History Connection  
Upper Arlington Historical Society

#### **Oklahoma**

Greatest Stories Never Told

#### **Pennsylvania**

Friends of Midland  
Pennsylvania Hallowed Ground Project  
Philadelphia Archaeological Forum

#### **South Carolina**

Gullah Society

#### **Vermont**

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office/  
Division for Historic Preservation

#### **Virginia**

African American Historical Society of  
Portsmouth  
Corhaven Graveyard  
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond  
Josephine School Community Museum  
Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery  
Preservation Piedmont (Charlottesville)  
Preservation Virginia  
Resurrecting History, Davis Burke Enterprises  
Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project  
Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project  
University of Virginia  
Virginia Humanities

#### **Washington, D.C.**

Mt Zion-Female Union Band Society Historic  
Memorial Park Foundation