

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee thank you for the opportunity to present HB 168 The Cemetery Restoration and Improvement Act.

HB 168 establishes a cemetery grant program and codifies recommendations brought forth by the Ohio Cemetery Law Force Report & Recommendations from 2014. A copy of the document is submitted along with my written testimony.

In 2013, the Ohio Department of Commerce—Division of Real Estate and Professional Licensing approached local government organizations, the Ohio Cemetery Association and the Ohio Cemetery Foundation about potential changes to cemetery law. This included discussions about creating a grant program for not-for-profit cemeteries.

Beyond establishing a grant program, HB 168 updates cemetery registration language to reflect current practices. To allow cemetery trust funds to be bonded OR insured with an appropriate policy, and allows Trustees to invest funds pursuant to the Ohio Prudent Investor Act.

This concept is supported by the Ohio Township Association, the Ohio Cemetery Association, and the Catholic Conference. The goal of HB 168 is to provide an additional funding stream and provide needed assistance for the care and maintenance of public cemeteries; as this important responsibility is mandated by law.

In my own rural district, I have 27 townships, each with at least one township managed cemetery. In fact, there are hundreds of cemeteries in the counties represented by the members of this committee.

I appreciate your attention to my testimony today and would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Elmwood Cemetery, Lorain, OH: City Managed



Picture 1: Headstone fading over time, cleaning moss and other debris



Picture 2: SCOTT & ESSIE LIMES SIDE VIEW



Picture 3: Broken headstone