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Leader Fentrice Driskell's Abandoned Cemeteries Bill Passes Second Committee Stop

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - Leader Fentrice Driskell (D-Tampa)'s bill, [House Bill 49 - Abandoned and Historic Cemeteries](#), unanimously passed its second committee stop. **HB 49** is a continuation of **Leader Driskell**'s commitment to addressing abandoned cemeteries in the State of Florida.

Leader Driskell and **former Senator Janet Cruz (D-Tampa)** first filed [HB 37](#) in 2021 following a [story](#) by Tampa Bay Times journalist, Paul Guzzo, who uncovered Zion Cemetery, an abandoned African-American cemetery in Tampa that now is under an affordable housing complex. **HB 37 (2021)** created a Statewide Task Force which published a [200-page report](#) with recommended strategies for the identification, recording, and education of abandoned cemeteries and burial grounds.

HB 49 seeks to codify the Task Force's recommendations. It creates the Historic Cemeteries Program and the Historic Cemeteries Program Advisory Council within the Department of State's Division of Historical Resources to support and facilitate abandoned and historic cemetery education and maintenance. With the passage of this bill, Floridians can be assured that this is a priority of the State.

"It is with great honor that I announce the passage of HB 49 with strong bipartisan support at its first two committee stops. I am looking forward to continuing working with my colleagues to get this bill through its remaining committee. I am committed to working towards a Florida where everyone has the freedom to be healthy, prosperous, and safe," said **Leader Driskell**.

HB 49 unanimously passed its first committee, the Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee on February 23, 2023. Its next stop will be the State Affairs committee. The Senate companion by **Senator Bobby Powell (D-West Palm Beach)**, [CS/SB 340](#), passed its first committee on March 15, 2023.

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