

The Right to be Remembered

Kankakee Institutional History and Burial Access Act

Restoring dignity, transparency, and access to Illinois' forgotten cemeteries.

Across Illinois, thousands of individuals- many institutionalized due to poverty, disability, or incarceration- were buried in cemeteries tied to state-run facilities like **Kankakee State Hospital** (now Shapiro Developmental Center). These burial grounds are often:

- Unmarked or poorly documented
- Located on private property
- Inaccessible to families, researchers, and the public
- Neglected and unmaintained

This erasure compounds historical injustice and denies descendants the right to mourn, remember, and reclaim their stories.

What the Bill Does

The Kankakee Institutional History and Burial Access Act guarantees:

- **Reasonable access** to institutional cemeteries on private land
- **Legal protections** for property owners from liability
- **Clear procedures** for advance notice and respectful visitation
- Remedies if access is unjustly denied

It applies to cemeteries affiliated with public institutions, including mental health hospitals and correctional facilities.

Why It Matters

- **Historical Justice:** Restores visibility to lives erased by institutionalization
- **Family Rights:** Empowers descendants to honor and investigate their lineage
- **Public Memory:** Preserves Illinois's institutional history for future generations
- **Precedent Exists:** States like Texas and Virginia already protect cemetery access

Who Supports It

- Families of institutional residents
- Genealogists and historians
- Preservationists and transparency coalitions

Support the **Kankakee Institutional History and Burial Access Act** to ensure that no one is buried and forgotten behind locked gates. Let Illinois lead the way in honoring its past and protecting the dignity of all its people.