

Thomas Howard

Senator Gerritano, Representative Johnson, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Thomas Howard and I am a local historian who with my wife and many volunteers recently restored an ancient 18th century "smallpox" cemetery in East Granby along the Metacomet Trail. From time to time the headstones deteriorated or were removed. By 1940 there was no sign that a grandfather and four of his young grandchildren were buried there.

Local records provided names and dates of five members of the Holcomb family. New memorials were purchased and placed in this cemetery in October 2013. Now hikers can again reflect on lives lived and lost while enjoying the view of the Farmington River valley. This small cemetery is one of maybe a 1000 in Connecticut in a similar state and position.

Cemeteries like people need care and should not be forgotten.

Cleaning up the grounds and borders and a simple sign - if headstones no longer can be seen - will go a long way to help inform folks of history around them. A little money can go a long way in our volunteer world.

Bill 5557 cannot do it all but it is something and goes in the right direction. It is also a fitting use of revenue from death certificates.