

Written Testimony of
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Member of the Connecticut State Board of Examiners
of Embalmers and Funeral Directors
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Sunset Review

The State Board of Examiners of Embalmers and Funeral Directors is made up of 3 Licensed Funeral Directors and Embalmers and 2 members of the public. This make up provides for both **a licensed perspective and public/consumer perspective** for issues and complaints that come before the Board. The board make up, representing both the consumer and licensed professional, has contributed to the success of the work of the board over the years.

The State Board of Examiners of Embalmers and Funeral Directors has regularly schedule meetings 4 times per year. In addition, hearings are scheduled as needed. Any one hearing is usually held over a period of several days. The regular meetings include open forum to hear from members of the public and profession, review of proposed laws affecting the profession, consideration of consent orders, and scheduling of hearings of the board with regards to complaints. The State Board of Examiners of Embalmers and Funeral Directors (licensed and public) has done an excellent job in handling complaints and **protecting the funeral service consumer** over the years.

The success of the Board of Examiners of Embalmers and Funeral directors is largely a result of the presence of **professional and licensed members as members of the Board who have a unique understanding of funeral service** and issues facing the licensed profession and the public consumer

-Licensed members of the Board have a comprehensive understanding of the rules, regulations and the practical application of laws put in place to protect the public.

-They possess a unique understanding of grief, and special issues families face as consumers.

-Licensed members provide an extensive understanding of funeral service issues such as FTC rules and regulations, laws concerning pre-paid funeral service contracts, and protections needed to make sure escrow funds are available when services are needed.

-And through their training as embalmers, they have firsthand knowledge of the characteristics of the human remains as it relates to the protection of the public's health

No other professional deals with consumers at such a delicate and vulnerable time of their lives.

-The death of a loved one is a highly charged emotional event for most families

-Grief can be expressed in lack of understanding, anger, and depression and withdrawal

-Only the funeral director, who deals with families on a regular basis, can fully understand some of the issues that can surface in the forms of complaints of mistreatment or unfair business practices.

-The licensed professional is the most qualified person to make sure consumers are not taken advantage of.

In the State of Connecticut, there are approximately 295 licensed funeral homes, 858 Licensed embalmer and funeral directors, and over 400 million dollars in pre-paid funeral funds.

Some examples of complaints that have come before the State Board in the past include:

- Overcharging
- Unprofessional conduct on the part of the funeral director
- Failure to properly present cost information to consumers
- Failure to properly safeguard pre-paid funds and place funds in escrow accounts
- Non-licensed practice,
- Welfare billing abuse,
- overcharging estates of unclaimed bodies

While the state board has been fair and equitable in its work and decision making process, this should not be interpreted as being easy on the profession. **The board holds itself to the highest standards of adhering to the FTC rules and regulations and State Public health laws. The main goal of the Board is to make sure the profession follows the law, and that the families that are served, are protected and treated correctly.**

The State Board of Examiners of Embalmers and Funeral Directors has served without any type of compensation for many years. In an age of state budget cuts and difficult economic times, we must not only be mindful of expenses to the state, but also make sure proper protections for the public are in place. This State Board helps to accomplish both of these important goals. Without the board in place, the State department overseeing the funeral service profession might include additional costs.

In closing, I urge you to come to a decision that insures funeral service licensed professionals will continue to be a part of overseeing the practice of funeral service in Connecticut as well as serving and protecting the interest of the public.