



CONNECTICUT
FUNERAL DIRECTORS
ASSOCIATION

Written Testimony of Pasquale Folino, President of CFDA
Public Health Committee
February 20, 2013

HB 5244, An Act Concerning the Provision of Certain Beverages and Food at Funeral Homes

Good afternoon Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Johnson, Senator Welch, Representative Srinivasan and the distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Pasquale Folino, I am the President of the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association (CFDA) which represents over 220 funeral homes in Connecticut. I'm also the co-owner of Neilan & Sons Funeral Homes in Niantic and New London.

CFDA sincerely appreciates the opportunity to present this testimony on House Bill 5244, An Act Concerning the Provision of Certain Beverages and Food at Funeral Homes. It is important for you to know that there is a lengthy history and much discussion among funeral directors regarding the concept of serving food and beverage in a funeral home. In fact, a similar proposal was raised in 2003 before the Regulation Review Committee. That proposed regulation was withdrawn by the Department of Public Health at the request of CFDA. This concept is particularly divisive among the 220 member funeral homes within CFDA. In 2003 we found that funeral directors were either passionately for or passionately against serving food and beverage in a funeral home. Ten years later the passion over this issue remains among funeral directors.

CFDA's purpose today is to share the findings of our recent survey that was sent to the 140 voting members who own the 220 funeral homes represented in our state association. We've have compiled the result of the survey and included the "Pro" and "Con" remarks from some of our members. Please refer to the attached documents: *Results of CFDA Food and Beverage Survey and Position Statement* and our CFDA survey to members.

I can testify today at length as to these pros and cons of serving food and beverage at funeral homes, however, I feel it more prudent to respectfully submit the findings of the survey, as follows:

Of the 140 voting members we received 79 responses or 56-percent of the membership.

- **72 % Oppose the Serving of Food and Beverage, (57 members)**
- **25 % Support the Serving of Food and Beverage, (20 members)**
- **3 % No Position, (2 members)**

Due to the overwhelming opposition to this proposal, CFDA would respectfully request that you not move forward with this legislation. Although the concept and any statutory defining of serving food and beverage in funeral home is one that may warrant future discussion and exploration, CFDA humbly asks you to defer action on this proposal as our Association explores a resolution to this currently divisive topic. Thank you for providing me this opportunity to testify, I'm available to answer any questions that you may have.

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Results of CFDA Food and Beverage Survey and Position Statement

The Pros of Serving Food and Beverage:

- Most states allow the serving of food and beverage (approximately 45 states)
- Enhances the services and level of comfort that we can offer to our families
- New potential source of income for declining services and merchandise
- Food and beverage are customarily a part of all life celebrations
- Choice: A funeral home can still decide to not service food and beverage
- Risk of losing services (memorials, celebrations of life) to hotels, restaurants, clubs

The Cons of Serving Food and Beverage:

- Increased overhead costs due to use/damage to facility
- Liability coverage will increase insurance costs if someone were to become ill, has allergies, etc.
- Possible competitive disadvantage due to facilities that do not have the space to appropriately serve food and beverage
- A funeral home may be forced to offer food and beverage to remain competitive
- Not consumer friendly due to increased costs that would be passed onto families for greater upkeep, maintenance and liability coverage of the funeral home
- Public Health regulations and compliance for food service can be difficult and costly (Board of Health inspectors, permits, special training for staff members)
- The dignity of the service we offer to the living and the care of the dead does not warrant food and beverage

Member responses out of 140 voting members: 79 Votes

- 72 % Oppose Food and Beverage, (57 members)
- 25 % Support Food and Beverage, (20 members)
- 3 % No Position, (2 members)

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