Connecticut Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

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Written Testimony of
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Connecticut Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

House Bill No. 6824, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs
Human Services Committee Public Hearing
February 26, 2015

Good day, Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and the distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Nicole Paquette and I am a Connecticut licensed funeral director and embalmer for the past 20-years. As co-chair of the legislative committee, I have the honor of representing the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association (CFDA) today, which represents 220 out of 295 funeral homes. I thank you for providing the forum in which to hear and consider this testimony.

The Connecticut Funeral Directors Association respectfully opposes any proposal that will reduce the current Funeral and Burial Allowance of Indigent Persons. This proposal seeks to reduce the current allowance of $1,800 to $1,000 for the funeral and burial allowance for indigent persons or beneficiaries under the state administered general assistance program. This represents a nearly 50-percent reduction.

CFDA is fully aware and appreciates the financial woes of our great State and surely your committee is challenged to find budget dollars. We are here tonight to provide a voice for persons who are truly indigent with absolutely no means to provide for their own burial or cremation. Our members proudly care for and serve these individuals at the time of their death. As you consider this budget cut please be ever mindful that in their death, you are considering impoverishing the impoverished further and making the poor, poorer. You are good people; please do not place balancing the state's budget upon the backs of the poor. In good conscience, it is morally wrong.

With cemetery charges to open and close a gravesite starting at $1,000, the option of casket burial is virtually out of the question. Truthfully, stretching the dollars for the current $1,800 provision is challenging, but many Connecticut funeral homes will provide limited services. A decrease in the allowance will result in an increase in the number of funeral homes who will no longer be able to provide their services.

CFDA respectfully asks the Appropriations Committee to leave intact the current allowance of $1,800. Together let us "not forget the forgotten", the impoverished, the poor, the destitute, the penniless and the paupers. These individuals are as deserving as you and I to be treated in death with dignity and respect and to have a cremation with honor or a proper burial. Please do not reduce this important, basic and human necessity provision that allows hundreds of caring licensed funeral directors to provide for the care and disposition of these individuals.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be pleased to answer any questions.