

Connecticut Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

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Written Testimony of
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SB 17, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services

Human Services Committee
Public Hearing
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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 the co-chair of the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association (CFDA), which represents 220 funeral homes. I thank you for considering this testimony in your endeavor to make appropriate budget recommendations.

The Connecticut Funeral Directors Association respectfully opposes any proposal that will further reduce the Funeral and Burial Allowance of Indigent Persons. This proposal seeks a **second reduction, within a year**, from the current allowance of \$1,400 to \$1,000 (for the funeral and burial allowance for deceased indigent persons or beneficiaries under the state administered general assistance program). This same allowance to care for the deceased poor was previously reduced during the 2015 legislative session (\$1,800 to \$1,400). The new proposal represents a nearly 50-percent overall reduction from June 2015 and it would actually reduce the allowance to less than what was provided 32 years ago, in 1984 (\$1,200 1984 - June 2007).

CFDA is here today to provide a voice for people who are truly indigent. Through the years, this indigent allowance has provided much good and it remains a necessity in all of the communities in our State. It has allowed our members, hundreds of caring licensed funeral directors, to care for and serve individuals who are as deserving as you and I, to be treated in death with dignity and respect. We truly appreciate the importance and necessity of your overwhelming obligation to find budget dollars, however, as you consider a second budget cut to this allowance, please do not look to the deceased poor. A second reduction will further erode the practicality of a "proper burial"; there will be instead, one option, a minimal disposition- disposal of human remains by cremation.

Currently, many Connecticut funeral homes continue to provide limited services with the current \$1,400 provision. However, there are third party costs beyond the funeral home's control. (The expenses of cemetery and/or crematory, medical examiner, permit(s), certified death certificate, probate cost for custody of remains, obituary notice, etc.). Unfortunately, not all of these third party charges are reduced at an indigent rate, including the State of Connecticut fees. A further reduced allowance would negatively impact the ability of a funeral director to provide burial, memorial or cremation services to members of our communities who are considered indigent.

CFDA respectfully asks the Human Services Committee to leave intact the already reduced allowance of \$1,400. Together let us "not forget the forgotten". Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be pleased to answer any questions.