February 22, 2017

Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, Representative Srinivasan, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee,

I am State Senator Michael McLachlan, and I am testifying today in support of SB 841 An Act Concerning Embalmers and Funeral Directors. The purpose of this legislation is to protect certain embalmers and funeral directors from disciplinary action for invalidation of a licensing examination.

This legislation is needed because 38 licensed funeral directors and embalmers are at risk of having their licenses revoked by the CT DPH.

This is due to a cheating scandal that took place at the American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Service (AAMI). The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (The Conference) determined recently that the Dean of AAMI supplied information to students that were going to take the exam, and also asked students to share information about the exams after they took them.

Due to this scandal, the Conference invalidated 38 Connecticut licenses of funeral directors and embalmers practicing in Connecticut. These are individuals who have been licensed and working in the funeral home industry for upwards of seven years.

AAMI and the Conference came to an agreement where McAllister paid over one million dollars to the Conference in order to keep their accreditation. They did not, however, keep the best interests of the students in mind, as they are being punished. Also, the Dean of the school did not lose their job.

Currently, in order for these students to not lose their license, they are required to take the exam over again. The students have to devote what may be several months to prepare to take the exam again, as the approved curriculum may have changed since the last test. They also have to pay out of their own pockets to retake the exam.

This legislation would allow these affected students to not lose their license and continue working in their industry. The settlement with the Conference and their school served them a true disservice, and this legislation is needed to correct a true wrong that was done to them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael A. McLachlan
State Senator – 24th District