

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6485
AN ACT CONCERNING NATURAL ORGANIC REDUCTION AND GREEN
Title: BURIALS.
Vote Date: February 17, 2023
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 1/30/2023
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
To provide an alternative natural and organic green burial in the state

Joint Favorable Substitute
Removes section 1 of the bill concerning the use of open space for green burials and establishes dates for DPH to adopt regulations

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection:

Commissioner Dykes testified about the concerns DEEP has with Section 1 of the bill. Open space funds are incompatible with this because they are granted to a municipality, non-profit or water company acquisition and the state is granted an easement in perpetuity but the use of protected properties as burial grounds conflicts with the terms of our standard open space easement which strictly forbids disposal of materials. Modifying the easements would require approval by the Natural Heritage, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board.

Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Department of Public Health:

This legislation is outside of DPH's scope regarding funeral services and if passed there would be a significant fiscal impact. The bill would require new regulations, a new certification program. engaging new business offering natural organic reduction, enforcement of the bill provisions and new regulations. Should this move forward there needs to be several revisions to clearly identify DPH and other agencies responsibilities.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Keith Denning, Representative:

Representative Denning testified that natural body composting is an ancient process where the body is placed in a sealed chamber and allowed to decompose naturally. As a result, carbon emissions are reduced, mortuary and funeral homes may offer their clients a different service and this is a more ecological process for burial.

Haley Morris, Earth Funeral:

Natural Organic Reduction is the most environmentally friendly, less intensive and reduces CO2 emissions by nearly 90% death care option. Those who choose this option are gently transforming a body into soil. That soil can then be returned to nature as nutrient rich. We are a licensed funeral home in Washington state and in addition to offering this service ourselves we collaborate with existing funeral homes.

Nicole Paquette, Legislative Chair, Connecticut Funeral Directors Association, Inc:

CFDA supports this bill which seeks land for the use of green burials and the composting of dead human remains. Human composting or terramation has been around since 2020 and five states including New York have approved the process. We agree with the regulatory provisions included with in Section 2 but view them as incomplete. We recommend the facility be licensed and subjected to annual renewals and inspections. The definition of "Cemetery corporation" should be redacted and include cemeteries, crematories and funeral homes that may own and operate a Natural Organic Reduction Facility.

Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters:

CTLCV supports this bill but asks that you do not tie this policy into the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program but work with eh Land Trust Community to design the details.

Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council:

Amy Blaymore supports the concept of green burials but has concerns with using open space grant funds as provided in section 1.

Laura Copland:

Green burials avoid the use of fossil fuel and are a natural organic means to reduce human remains with safely and dignity.

Julie DesChamps:

According to an early National Funeral Directors survey 54 percent of Americans are considering a green burial. Green burials provide significance environmental and fiscal benefits.

Craig Guild: Craig Guild testified that he can't think of anything more respectful than using what little remains of a person to pass on to bring life to a forest or garden. This is an opportunity to provide residents and the environment with afterlife care that meets people's needs and desires.

John Hall, Executive Director, The Jonah Center for Earth and Art: John Hall testified that as Executive Director and a retired clergy person I am aware of the many sensitivities that pertain to the disposition of a human body after death. I am very supportive of these "modern" techniques and there is no reason why organic reduction of human remains should not be available.

Christine O'Neill: Christine O'Neill testified that as an Environmental planner for my Council of Governments and a supporter of this alternative to traditional burial or cremation. This will allow environmentalists to feel comfort that we do as little harm as possible to the earth.

The following also testified in support of the bill:

Laura Copland	Aoril Possol
Richard Newton	Caroline Miller
Christina Kursawe	Janice DiRoberts
Sarah Coon	Kayla Bartlett

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association: Eric Hammerling testified about his concerns about Section 1 and in my capacity as Executive Director I have seen open space dollars stretched too thinly and fall short of what is necessary. This section also directs DEEP to report how open space could be granted to utilizing land for green burials.

Stephen Mendelsohn: Stephen Mendelsohn testified that we are dealing with a profound devaluation of human dignity. Traditional Jewish funeral practices are almost entirely green, but Halacha forbids deriving benefits from a corpse. Section 1 is antithetical to the dignity of green burial. There is nothing "natural", "organic" or even gentle about human composting. Of the six states that have authorized human composting only Colorado has a restriction on the sale of "human compost".

Dr. Linda Dalessio: Dr. Linda Dalessio testified that she strongly opposes this bill and as a Christian it desecrates and disrespects the human body. We are made in God's image and should not be thrown away for human compost.

Mary Nagy: Mary Nagy testified that the bill is misleading and refers to two separate processes. The practice of human composting will not provide benefit to anyone including the environment.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: February 22, 2023