

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6602

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND FUNERAL HOMES.

Vote Date: 3/27/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/22/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill has several components designed to improve the services provided by funeral directors in the state. The bill requires:

- The Department of Public Health (DPH) to give all state-licensed funeral directors equal access to the state's electronic death registry.
- The DPH to inspect funeral home buildings annually, a change from the current practice of once every three years.
- The DPH to study whether to exempt certain funeral directors from employing a full-time licensed embalmer.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Manisha Juthani, MD, Commissioner, CT Department of Public Health (DPH):

The Commissioner is unsure whether the language in Section 1 will achieve the desired results but offered to work with the advocates to develop more appropriate language. Regarding Section 3, the Commissioner believes this section is unnecessary as DPH is already doing this. The bill also conflicts with current state statute requiring an inspection every three years. The Commissioner believes that the current frequency is sufficient to ensure the health and safety of these funeral homes.

Farley Santos, CT State Representative, 109th District, CT General Assembly:

Rep. Santos believes that Section 2, requiring funeral directors to retain full-time embalmers is becoming unnecessary given the declining numbers of embalming services. Requiring a funeral director to be a licensed embalmer before he becomes a funeral director is no longer the norm to be removed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Daniel Jowdy, Member, CT Board of Embalmers:

Mr. Jowdy supports all three parts of the bill especially the section regarding funeral homes along the state border and their access to the Electronic Death Registry System (EDRS). It is an inconvenience for funeral directors in bordering states, who are licensed in Connecticut, when their clients receive health care in Connecticut. Yet, when the individual passes away, the bordering- state funeral director cannot get access to the EDRS. This bill will help alleviate this inconvenience for clients who would other wise be forced to use a CT funeral home.

Christopher Milano, Beecher Funeral Home, Brewster, NY:

Mr. Milano testifies that a recent change from a paper death certificate to an electronic record unfairly disenfranchised owners of funeral homes on the state's borders. Many of these funeral homes maintain licensure in CT. This bill corrects this flaw by allowing CT-licensed funeral homes access to the Electronic Death Registry System.

Brett Ferrara, Funeral Director, New York:

As a licensed embalmer in both CT and NY, Mr. Ferrara performs as a funeral tradesman. When CT enacted an electronic death certificate and didn't include out-of-state funeral directors or embalmers, it made it impossible for Mr. Ferrara to get access to the Electronic Death registry System. HB 6602 corrects this oversight and allows CT-licensed funeral directors and embalmers to service clients where the death occurred in CT.

Others in Support of This Bill:

Stavros Dimopoulos, Ralph Giordano Funeral Home
Andrew House, Hufcut Funeral Home
Anthony Imperiale, Licensed Funeral Director

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jesse Gomes, Director of Funeral Services, Goodwin University:

The concern with this bill is the perception of a change in the educational requirements for a funeral director's license. Appropriate competencies and training are necessary to handle human remains with respect. The current curriculum is the correct path for licensure.

Niccole Paquette, Legislative Chair, CT Funeral Directors Association (CFDA):

Current language exists that does permit the completion of the death certificate through EDRS or on a paper form provided to the licensed funeral director or embalmer. If they are out-of-state but are part of a reciprocal agreement on file with DPH, they can get access to this form. CFDA also opposes Section 2, lines 17-20 that provides an exemption for a licensed funeral director, who owns the funeral home, not to employ a full-time embalmer. More than providing the science and art of embalming, the embalmer also is the caretaker of human remains which may have a communicable disease. By not having an embalmer, the funeral home is unable to appropriately dispose of remains in a safe manner. CFDA believes having a licensed embalmer is critical to public safety and health.

Reported by: David Rackliffe

Date: April 5, 2023

