



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 8, 2024

**Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD
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House Bill 5354, An Act Concerning Terramation

The Department of Public Health (DPH) provides the following information on House Bill 5354 An Act Concerning Terramation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

DPH's Environmental Engineering section currently approves plans for mausoleums, crematories, and private burial grounds, while the Practitioner Licensing program licenses funeral directors and embalmers. This proposed legislation is outside of DPH's scope regarding funeral services. If passed, this would have a significant fiscal impact as DPH would need to hire additional staff, which were not included in the Governor's recommended budget adjustments, to carry out this new workflow. This work will require the development of new regulations – which we do not currently have subject matter expertise in – the development of a new certification program, engaging new businesses offering natural organic reduction, and enforcing the provisions of this bill and the accompanying regulations.

This bill will also impact our Vital Records Office, as natural organic reduction will be classified as an alternative method of disposition on death certificates. The office will also play a role in the permitting process for disposal of a body through a natural organic reduction. Updates to the various forms associated with death certificates and the electronic death registry will require the appropriate, and currently unbudgeted, funding.

Additionally, CGS 20-212 currently limits the disposing of dead human bodies to licensed embalmers, funeral directors, and funeral service businesses. This section also limits the removal of dead human bodies to a licensed embalmer, a registered student embalmer, a licensed funeral director, or certain individuals authorized by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). Should this bill move forward, the language will need several revisions to clearly and appropriately identify DPH and other agency responsibilities.

Like cremation, the natural organic reduction process will render the body unavailable for further inquiry and will therefore fall under the jurisdiction of OCME (See CGS section 19a-406). Given the similar end result of the human remains, it is recommended that the workflow for approval

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of disposition of a body through natural organic reduction mirrors that which is required for bodies that are to be cremated. The process involves the OCME, as well as the local vital records registrars who sign the cremation permit and maintain the permit on file.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. DPH encourages committee members to reach out with any questions.