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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Testimony in opposition to HB 6257
An Act Authorizing the Use of Terramation
March 17, 2025

Sen. Lopes, Rep. Parker, and members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Cathy Ludlum. I live in Manchester, and I care deeply about the future of our planet. I am a dedicated recycler, but I do not agree with the recycling of deceased bodies.

To me, bodies need to be treated with reverence, as they have once held a precious human life. The idea of turning our loved ones into fertilizer and mulch sickens me. I don't think I am alone here.

Although I would not interfere with someone else's personal choice, neither would I want other people's choices to interfere with mine.

How could that happen? It says in the bill (lines 167-170) that

Such remains shall be disposed of through the scattering of such remains in a designated scattering garden or area in a cemetery or, by prior authorization by the cemetery corporation, by placing such remains in a grave, crypt or niche, or retention of such remains...

There are so many places here for things to go wrong. Unlike cremation, which yields 4-7 pounds of ashes, terramation yields approximately 1000 pounds¹ of organic material. Disposal would need to be handled differently.

Many people advocating for this method say that they would like to incorporate the soil in their yard or spread it in a public forest. These activities will not be regulated, and even if they were, the regulations could not be enforced.

While line 173-175 cautions that "No such remains shall be utilized or sold for any purpose related to the development of direct-to-consumer food sales," this is an extremely narrow restriction, which would seem to apply mainly to farmer's markets. What would prevent a homeowner from growing a vegetable garden enhanced by a relative's remains, and either sharing the overflow with neighbors, or donating it to the local food pantry? Technically, this would be within the bounds of the law, but there are people who would object to eating that produce.

What would prevent a farmer from using a parent's remains to enhance the soil and then sell the produce to the supermarket? There would be no direct-to-consumer sale, but again, not everyone would want to partake in this produce.

People who live in apartments may not have any garden in which to put this truckload of mulch or fertilizer. They will be forced by practicality to unload it somewhere. While I am not suggesting that most people would sell their relatives' remains to Home Depot, there is repeated reference to the high-quality mulch resulting from the terramation process. The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardners Association (MOFGA) testified that this would be a good way to enrich depleted soil resources.²

Placing remains in a national or state forest may sound appealing at first, but again, there are hikers who would be appalled to think that they are treading on human remains. In many cultures, it's considered to disrespectful or to bring bad luck.³ In our modern age, when we are trying to become more aware and respectful of cultural differences, it is especially important not to impose unwelcome practices on others.

Nowhere in HB 6257 are there any criminal penalties for misuse of composted remains. At the very least there need to be regulations about where and how these remains are used, and whom they come in contact with. Someone who does not feel comfortable should not be forced into contact with them. That is a violation of a person's rights.

I ask you to vote no on HB 6257.

Thank you.

Sources:

- ¹ Recompose. Frequently Asked Questions.
<https://recompose.life/faqs/how-much-soil-is-created-by-human-composting/>
- ² Testimony from the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardners Association (MOFGA) on LD 536 - An Act to Provide Natural Organic Reduction Facilities for Maine Residents for the Conversion of Human Remains to Soil
<https://legislature.maine.gov/testimony/resources/HHS20230404Spalding133250896769757474.pdf>
- ³ Blind Pig & the Acorn. Burial Customs and Superstitions
<https://blindpigandtheacorn.com/burial-custom-and-superstitions/>