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Dear Members of the House of Delegates,

After sitting through this SB 893 I had some observations of those in favor of the bill and wanted to make sure facts were known that pertain to the cremation process of human remains as there were some inaccuracies in what I heard. My colleague and I compiled a bit of factual information for you as follows:

Operating Temperature: The lead proponent speaker indicated that cremations were performed at a temperature of 1900 degrees. When we opened our cremation facility in 2012, we were licensed by MDE to begin a cremation at 1800 degrees. Several years ago, **the setting was reduced to 1600 degrees due to improved technology and to conserve on fuel.**

Gasoline with Lead: during her presentation, the lead speaker indicated that gasoline is used to perform cremations, which allegedly releases harmful levels of lead into the environment. **This is incorrect as natural gas is the fuel source utilized.**

Cremation Includes: during the presentation, it was implied that the cremation process includes a number of items:

- **Metals (non-Biological)** – it is standard practice to **physically remove as much metal from the cremation container as possible.** If a casket is used, metal handles as well as hinges & locks are removed providing the casket can be moved safely without injury to the operator. While screws, staples and nails may be used in the construction of the casket, **these are not destroyed during the cremation process** and are removed during the processing phase of the cremated remains.
- **Metals (Surgical Implants)** – like dental fillings, the removal of implants would be **considered desecration of the body.** Implants, usually made from titanium, may be hip, knee & shoulder joints, rods supporting the spinal column, etc. Like

casket hardware, **these will not be destroyed during the cremation process and are removed at the time the cremated remains are processed.**

- **Jewelry** – as policy, we are required to ensure that all jewelry has been removed by the funeral director. If any jewelry is found, it is removed, bagged, labeled with the name, and returned to the family.
- **Pacemakers** – pacemakers are required to be removed from the deceased prior to cremation, which is a simple task. If left in place, a pacemaker may explode and may cause severe damage to the cremation chamber. **Any implant containing a battery is removed as standard practice.**
- **Dental Fillings** – there has been discussion on this over the years and the industry determined that removing the dental fillings would be considered **desecration of the human remains.**
- **Drugs** – any drugs cremated are those that have been consumed by the deceased and are now present within the soft tissues of the body. It is a routine practice to pat-down the deceased for any forbidden items such as drugs, bullets, fireworks, etc.
- **Batteries** – as with the pacemaker, which is battery driven, **all batteries are removed from the deceased.**
- **Make-up** – if the deceased is having a traditional funeral where there is a viewing and service first, then the deceased does have make-up. However, in our situation, most of our cremations are before any service and almost all the people are not wearing make-up. Death is not pretty and to not have the deceased wearing make-up during a traditional funeral could present psychological problems to those viewing the body during the visitation and service.
- **Prothesis** – while surgical items within the body may be considered as prothesis, in the classic sense, we use the term to refer to artificial arms, legs and other items of this nature. Again, as a routine practice, the funeral director removes these items from the deceased when preparing the body for cremation.
- **Other Items** – other items that we routinely remove from the cremation container are those usually placed there by the family for their loved one to enjoy in the afterlife. These could include, but are not limited to, cans/bottles of beer/soda, toys, letters, cards, etc. If any items are deemed not safe to cremate, they are removed and returned to the family.

Reporting to MDE: funeral homes are required to file an *annual* report with the MDE. The report is significant we are required to track the total weight of each cremation as well as the actual cremation time. These numbers are then plugged into formulas with certain criteria provided by MDE, which in total, provides the measure of the emissions produced each year base based on Tons/Year and Pounds/Day. Those gases that have been tracked in recent years include...

- CO – carbon oxide
- HAPS – Hazardous Air Pollutants

- NOx – Nitrogen Oxides
- SOx – Sulfur Oxides
- VOC – Volatile Organic Compounds
- PM – Particulate Matter
- PM10 – Filterable Matter
- Billable Air Pollutants
- Greenhouse Gasses

Mercury: the proponent team specifically mentioned that mercury was introduced into the atmosphere by the cremation process. In 1995, an abstract published by Schweiz Monatsschr Zahnment, a German medical journal, reported that, based on a Swiss study, ***“the amount of mercury contamination during cremation as a result of amalgam fillings is so low that no additional preventative measures are required at the crematoria.”*** In another study conducted in the United Kingdom on land surrounding a crematorium, the final results indicated that the level of mercury at ***“.15 mg/kg, almost seven times lower than that allowed for food production and more than 100 times lower than that allowed for children’s playgrounds. The soils were deemed uncontaminated even after 112,000 cremations and 40 years of operation.”***

Studies: in another comment by the proponent lead, she indicated that ‘many studies show a negative impact on health’ and then just a short time later makes the statement that people’s health is at risk. Which is it? Is there no negative impact or is there a health risk. It appears as if the speaker is contradicting herself as she stated that there was no “negative impact” first.

Canadian Wildfires: one presenter compared the act of cremation to the Canadian wildfires experienced this past summer. **This point is mute as they are not even relatable.** The wildfires are an act of nature, with the “emissions” produced uncontrollable by man. Cremations on the other hand, are completely controlled.

COVID: granted, COVID did place a strain on the cremation industry like it did on many industries. However, **the bodies did not stack up.** We routinely refrigerated COVID cases which places the COVID virus into a dormant state. At cremation time, the deceased was taken from the cooler and placed directly into the cremation chamber. While the COVID virus would again become active as the virus warmed up, remember the chamber is already at 1600 degrees when the body enters. The COVID virus effectively killed at around 150 degrees.

MDE Findings: it was stated that MDE only inspected 7% of those businesses licensed by MDE. Of those 7% inspected, the presenter stated that there were zero (0) findings of any issues. I would think that if they didn’t find any issues, it would be a good thing.

Smoke Stack (Chimney): As the proponent speaker completed her PowerPoint presentation, she showed a photo of a crematory stack spewing thick smoke. **Please be advised that the photo is of a pet crematory.** Human crematory stacks are constructed differently. Several years ago, we totally rebuilt the inside of our cremation unit. During the process, the stack was lifted down from the roof to be inspected. Measuring approximately three feet across, the interior is lined with fire brick. What surprised me is that the brick, after being in service for about ten years, was almost the same shade of tan as the new brick being installed in the cremation chamber. To me, this shows that we have had clean (non-smoky) cremations over the years. If we had spewed smoke as shown in that picture, the color would have been dramatically different.

Questions to Consider: based upon all the alleged “issues” that the proponents have against cremation...

- If it were truly bad for your health, why would anyone want to work in the cremation field?
- Again, if all this is true, why recommend an amendment to “grandfather” existing crematory? Why not just attempt to shut down the industry?
- If the buffer zone is implemented, will builders be prevented from building anything within 1000 feet of a crematory? If it is permitted, then any dwellings identified on the list are that are built within the zone, would effectively put the crematory out of business again.
- If a replacement is required to an existing cremation unit- it becomes classified as new therefore several years to the future not crematory can replace equipment as they would fall within the new restriction ultimately eliminating crematories completely in a populated area.

Below is my original message in strong opposition of the bill for your convenience.

Dear Members of House of Delegates,

I am in **strong opposition to Senate Bill 893 (SB 893) and House Bill 1374 (HB 1374)**, which propose to prohibit the siting of new crematories within 1000 feet of day care centers, schools, and residences. Additionally, these bills seek to prevent the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) from issuing permits to operate crematories in violation of these restrictions. While I understand the concern for public health and safety, I believe that these bills are deeply flawed and would have severe consequences for both the crematory industry and consumers.

One of the major issues with SB 893 and HB 1374 is the **ambiguity in their language**. While it may be the intention to only apply these restrictions to new crematories, the wording of the bill does not make this clear. Opponents of crematories could potentially exploit this ambiguity to argue that existing crematories within 1000 feet of these structures are also prohibited from renewing their permits. This lack of clarity creates uncertainty and could lead to significant disruptions for existing facilities and their surrounding communities.

Passage of either of these bills would not only impact planned or existing crematories but also place a **heavy burden on consumers**. By raising the cost of cremation or forcing families to seek cremation services out of state, these bills would limit access to a preferred and affordable option for disposition. With cremation rates expected to rise, it is essential to ensure that adequate facilities are available to meet this demand. However, SB 893 and HB 1374 would hinder the development of new facilities, resulting in increased wait times for cremation and additional financial burdens for families.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that **crematories are already regulated by the MDE through their permitting process**. This process includes rigorous operational limits, emission monitoring requirements and regular inspections to safeguard public health and safety. By imposing arbitrary prohibitions, SB 893 and HB 1374 undermine the effectiveness of the MDE's regulatory framework and disregard the expertise of environmental authorities.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose SB 893 and HB 1374 and to reconsider alternative approaches that address concerns about crematory citing without unduly burdening the industry and consumers. Collaborative efforts involving stakeholders, experts, and affected communities are needed to develop solutions that balance public health and safety with the needs of all stakeholders.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Holly K. McComas
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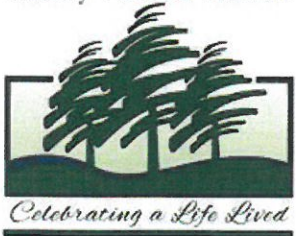
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