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Subject: Opposition to HB 1374 – Siting of Crematories

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to HB 1374 currently under consideration in the Environment and Transportation Committee. As a concerned member of the death care industry, a funeral home owner and the current President of the Maryland State Funeral Directors Association, I believe that this proposed legislation has several significant flaws and potential negative consequences that warrant careful consideration.

After sitting in and testifying at the hearing for SB 893, it has become clear that the main proponents in favor of both bills are almost exclusively concerned with the issue of air quality control and possible air pollution surrounding crematories in addition to the matter of whether or not the Maryland Department of the Environment, MDE, is regulating crematories correctly. Because of this, **I strongly feel this is a matter that should be taken up with the Maryland Department of the Environment as that is where the issues of the proponents primarily lie. The solution to many of their concerns would be to ask the Maryland Department of the Environment for stricter regulations or processes to ensure better air quality control by the standards they propose, not hinder business owners and any potential future employees that these crematories could open up jobs for by complicating the building or operations of crematories.**

As I am sure many crematory operators and owners have already written to the committee and its members detailing the various aspects of how the MDE regulates crematories, **I want to point out that 100% of crematories are regulated every year.** The existing regulations required of the MDE for crematories in the state of Maryland are extensive and thorough. In addition, many of the various ‘pollutants’ those in favor of this bill are claiming get released through cremation into the air are incorrect. Others, such as Holly McComas of McComas Family Funeral Homes, have detailed these inconsistencies in their written testimony.

If passed, this bill could also negatively impact the consumers who choose cremation by reducing the number of affordable options. This bill would significantly lessen the number of crematories that are allowed to open, and possibly hinder those already operating, resulting in the cost to the funeral home and the consumers to grow beyond the point that makes cremation a helpful, cost-effective alternative to traditional burial. Not only will costs have to be raised in order for funeral homes to be able to travel to crematories that are still operational under the new guidelines, safe storage of the remains under MD law Health-General Article, section 5-513(b) will lengthen the time frame and thus the cost overall of the cremation services able to be provided.

My funeral home, Harry H. Witzke’s Family Funeral Home of Ellicott City, MD, **is in Howard County which currently has no operating crematories.** For our families asking for cremation services, we do not have an onsite crematory so we use two others a distance of 15-30 minutes one way from us and do both drop offs and pick ups in an effort to reassure our families that their loved one is staying in our care at all times. Our transfer fee is \$495 to date, the minimum

receptacle required to be used is \$95, our daily refrigeration cost is \$145 (which must be used by law when embalming is refused to keep a decedent with us until it is time for the cremation), and the crematory fee is \$275 (the crematory sets this fee and we do not make anything from it). There is also a \$150 witness fee if the family wishes to be present at the crematory for the start of the cremation (again the price is set by the crematory.)

These costs vary from funeral home to funeral home, crematory to crematory. I know of a corporate funeral home in Howard County that charges \$600 for a transfer fee but they do not have their pricing online so we do not know their further costs for sure.

As I'm sure the Committee is aware, it is difficult to build in Howard County in general but building a crematory would likely be even more so. We have always wanted to have a crematory at our facility as the public interest for an on site crematory is growing and occasionally we lose families to other funeral homes that have their own crematory. In addition, if we were to have to travel any farther for crematory usage, many of our families that wish to witness the cremation of their loved one would be severely inconvenienced if not miss out on that experience entirely due to distance.

Furthermore, the unclear language in this bill could prevent existing crematories within these proposed parameters from either expanding their crematories to meet consumer needs or even replace cremation retorts if that action is needed to continue their operations. The Cremation Association of North America, CANA, has already done research that concluded the crematories of Maryland are at or near capacity. To not only limit the opening of new crematories but also potentially hinder the possible expansion and continued operation of much needed, already established crematories would be detrimental to both the owners of those crematories and the funeral homes in the state trying to meet consumer needs to the best of their abilities. Consumer needs that are only expected to grow in the coming years. **CANA reports that consumer need for cremation could rise as high as 67% of all funeral options chosen in just a little over 10 years.** Our industry trends normally follow a northwest to southeast pattern and some states in the northwest have already risen to over 80% cremation rate so we know the rise in consumer need is inevitable.

I urge this committee to reconsider allowing this bill to move forward in any capacity as it is not in the best interests of our community or the public at large who would be negatively impacted by this legislation. Thank you for your attention to this matter, we trust that you will carefully evaluate the potential ramifications of HB 1374 and make decisions that prioritize the well-being of our community as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samantha Logan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Samantha Logan