



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maryland and Environs

Protecting a consumer's right to a meaningful, dignified, and affordable funeral.

**Senate Finance Committee, Maryland General Assembly
Testimony on SB0957 – Morticians and Funeral Directors – Not -For-Profit Funeral Establishments**

Position: Support Hearing date February 25, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony from the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maryland and Environs (FCAME) in support of Senate Bill 0957, which would allow not-for-profit funeral homes in Maryland.

Currently, members of religious groups who wish to adhere to the traditional funeral practices of their belief system by practicing rituals such as preparing and sitting with the body, as is the tradition in the Jewish faith, must arrange to do so by contracting with a traditional for-profit funeral establishment that will allow the use of its facilities for this activity. This results in higher costs than are necessary. We are aware of the fact that this is the case for the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, whose mission is to provide simple, hands-on services for members of their community. Allowing groups such as theirs to establish their own funeral establishments would enable them to control their costs and the environment in which their after-death care takes place, resulting in more personalized care consistent with their beliefs and traditions.

For centuries, members of local communities typically cared for their own dead, usually in their own homes, according to the practices and beliefs familiar and meaningful to them. It is only within the last 150 years that caring for the dead became something that was externalized to a business, with removal of the body to a place outside the home, and the normalization of practices such as embalming and preparation of the body by strangers, with costly caskets and vaults. It should be possible for local, religious, or otherwise defined communities willing to provide more traditional, simple, hands-on, personalized, and environmentally friendly funeral practices to do so under the auspices of their own establishments. SB0957 would allow that.

FCAME is concerned with providing grieving families with individual and affordable choices that allow them to do what they believe is best for their loved ones. We ask the committee to report favorably on this bill.

Testimony submitted by Barbara Blaylock, President of FCAME.

FCAME is the volunteer-run, regional chapter of the non-profit Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA), the oldest and largest consumer protection organization focused solely on guarding the rights and wallets of grieving consumers. FCA and its affiliates take no money from the death care industry or the government.

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