

**MITCHELL-WIEDEFELD FUNERAL HOME, INC.**

6500 YORK ROAD AT OVERBROOK  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21212

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I am John O. "Jack" Mitchell IV, a sixth-generation funeral director in Baltimore. I have served as President of the Maryland State Funeral Directors Association and recently had the privilege of serving as President of the National Funeral Directors Association

With regard to HB1051(2025), which would allow for not-for-profit organizations to own and operate licensed funeral establishments in Maryland, I respectfully submit my opposition to the bill.

There has been an established regulation in Maryland for many years that a funeral establishment may be owned only by a licensed mortician or funeral director. Families call upon funeral homes to take care of their loved ones while they are enduring a most difficult experience of that loss. Funeral directors consider it a high complement when people say to us that they could never do what we do, or even question why we would ever want to do it.


Some of us were born into funeral service. I have great admiration and appreciation for those who were not born into it, but had an experience at the time of the loss of a loved one which made them feel compelled to do the same for others and make funeral service their chosen profession. Either way, we felt it to be a calling, and it is we who should own and operate funeral establishments.

In Maryland, a Bachelor's degree is not required to become a licensed funeral director as it is in some states, nor is the embalming part of mortuary science education. While it is not an effortless process to become a licensed funeral director, as it well should not be, I don't see why anyone would wish to own and operate a funeral home but not want to go through the process of becoming a funeral director. What motivates them to want to own a funeral home? It has to be something other than the calling that the rest of us have felt, and grieving families will not be served as well by them

Yes, all funeral establishments must have a supervising mortician who is licensed. But that supervising mortician operates at the behest of the owner. It is the owner who sets the funeral home's policies, practices and procedures. As I understand it, a not-for-profit scenario would not entail a singular owner, but a Board of Directors. If those Board members do not have a background in funeral service, let alone a license, there is only so much that the supervising mortician can do to ensure that the families being served are well taken care of.

I do not deny that the prospect of added competition in our field also gives me pause, and competition on a non-level playing field at that. Whereas we count on the income from our day-to-day business to cover our overhead and keeping us operating above water, not-for-profit organizations can accept money from benefactors to support them. But passage of this bill would allow for those who wish to get into funeral service for reasons other than simply feeling called to serve, help, and care for those who are bereaved to make an end run around a good and already existing law. And that would not be for the greater good of the funeral consumers of Maryland. I, therefor, reiterate my opposition to it.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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John O. "Jack" Mitchell IV