



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Ryan Moran, DrPH, MHSA, Acting Secretary

March 13, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill (HB) 1555 - Funeral Establishments, Crematories, and Reduction Facilities - Oversight (Ensuring Dignity and Accountability in Crematory and Funeral Home Operations Act) - Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with Amendments for House Bill (HB) 1555 - Funeral Establishments, Crematories, and Reduction Facilities - Oversight (Ensuring Dignity and Accountability in Crematory and Funeral Home Operations Act). The bill requires the State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors to update certain regulations for funeral establishments, crematories, and reduction facilities, and to improve transparency, inspection practices, and oversight of the Board. Specifically, the bill would bring the Board under the oversight of the Department, empowering the Secretary of Health to take a more direct role in Board operations.

In general, Maryland's health occupation boards operate independently.¹ This structure has traditionally limited the Department's role in operation and oversight of Board functions. However, there are cases when a Board requires more support. For example, in 2023, the General Assembly passed HB 011/SB 960 - State Board of Nursing – Sunset Extension, Licensure Exceptions, and Board Operations and Membership empowered the Secretary of Health to enact operational reforms for a period of two years.² During this time, the Board of Nursing and the Department successfully partnered to improve staffing, complaint response and investigation, fiscal responsibility, technology & application processing, and constituent services and communications. This recent example illustrates the Department's ability to improve a board's efficacy and efficiency.

¹ Maryland Department of Health, MDH Boards, <https://health.maryland.gov/Pages/boards.ASPX>

² Maryland Department of Health and Maryland Board of Nursing, Update for Health and Government Operations Committee: Implementation of HB 611 and 2025 Departmental Legislation, January 22, 2025, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting_material/2025/hgo%20-%20133820430933658697%20-%201%20-%20MDH%20Board%20of%20Nursing%20Update.pdf

The Department supports the effort to bring the Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors partially under its purview in response to recent concerns. Not only does the Department have the experience of supporting the Board of Nursing when circumstances required, but it also executes relevant work in the areas of decedent management, mitigation of public health hazards, and the licensing, regulation and inspection of a diverse collection of health facilities. It has broad institutional knowledge in upholding facility standards, managing inspection protocol and staff, identifying deficiencies and non-compliance, which are key functions the Board is called on to improve.

With the expertise and the capabilities described above, the Department is ready and able to provide oversight of funeral homes and morticians at this time. The Department does recommend an amendment to have the Department's supervision authority sunset in three years, at which time the need for continued supervision can be reassessed.

The Department believes it will incur costs if the bill is passed as written. Specifically, the Board needs to raise revenues by \$143,000 per year to maintain current operations. Additional staffing and the establishment and maintenance of the online database that includes information regarding each violation by, and inspection of, each funeral establishment, would require additional revenue. The ability to implement these changes is dependent on the Board raising fees.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ryan B. Moran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ryan B. Moran, DrPH, MHSA
Acting Secretary