

Chairperson and Members of the House,

My name is Jessica Benson, and I am submitting this testimony as both a grieving pet owner and a voice for the many families who were unknowingly affected by a lack of oversight in the animal cremation industry.

Last year, after the loss of my beloved pet, I made what I believed was a responsible and loving decision — to have him cremated through a business that presented itself as a legitimate animal crematory. Like many families, I trusted that there were systems in place to ensure that this process would be handled with dignity and honesty.

There were not.

The individual operating that business misrepresented their services for years. Instead of providing cremation, they returned fraudulent remains to grieving families — including me. What we received were not the ashes of our beloved companions, but materials meant to deceive us during an already vulnerable time.

This situation exposed a deeply concerning gap: there are not sufficient regulations, oversight mechanisms, or accountability standards governing animal crematory businesses in many areas. Consumers are left to rely on trust alone — and when that trust is broken, the consequences are deeply personal and lasting.

This issue extends beyond my individual experience. It represents a systemic failure that allowed one person to exploit grief repeatedly, without detection, for an extended period of time.

Grief should never be a business opportunity for deception.

This legislation is necessary to establish clear expectations and protections, including:

- Licensing requirements for animal crematory operators
- Routine inspections and compliance standards
- Transparent record-keeping and chain-of-custody procedures
- Meaningful penalties for fraudulent or unethical practices

These measures are not excessive — they are foundational. They ensure that families are treated with respect and that ethical businesses are supported by clear standards.

When we entrust a business with the remains of a beloved pet, we are placing our faith in their integrity. That trust should be protected by law, not left to chance.

I cannot undo what happened to my pet or to the many others affected. But this body has the opportunity to close this gap and prevent future harm.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and put safeguards in place to ensure that no other family experiences this kind of deception.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jessica Benson