

Submitted by: Joy Schoonover

Regarding: HB564 – Oversight of Pet Crematories

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joy, and I'm here today because of my cat, Garfield. Garfield wasn't "just a pet." He was family — not only to me, but to my children. My youngest daughter was five years old when we rescued him. She's twenty-two now. Garfield grew up alongside her. He was part of her childhood, part of our home, and part of our hearts.

When Garfield passed, I wanted to give him the dignity he deserved. I trusted Loving Pet Crematory to help me honor him. Instead, Garfield became part of the Loving Pet Crematory scandal — a scandal that shattered the trust I placed in a service that should have cared for him with respect.

Learning that Garfield may not have been cremated individually, that the ashes I received might not even be his, felt like losing him all over again. And to learn that Garfield had been left in a hearse for three months, alongside thirty-eight other pets who were never returned to their families, felt like a second loss — a betrayal no family should ever endure. No parent should have to look their child in the eye and admit they don't know what happened to the pet they loved.

This is why we need HB564. We need HB564 because families deserve honesty. We need HB564 because grieving pet owners deserve accountability. We need HB564 because no animal should ever be treated the way Garfield was.

Grief is already heavy. But the grief that comes from betrayal — from realizing your pet's final moments may not have been treated with dignity — is something entirely different. It lingers. It changes you. And it is preventable.

HB564 is about accountability. It is about oversight. It is about making sure that when we hand over our pets — members of our families — we can trust that they will be treated with respect.

This bill is not about punishment. It is about protection. It is about ensuring that what happened to Garfield, and to so many other pets, never happens again. Garfield deserved better. Every pet deserves better. And the people who love them deserve the truth.

I am asking you to pass HB564 so no other family has to experience the confusion, heartbreak, and grief that mine still does every single day.

Thank you for your time, and for listening to Garfield's story.