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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 17, 2026
The Maryland State Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Pamela Beidle
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Senate Bill 510 – State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors – Funeral Direction
Licensure and Apprentices – Requirements**

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Hayes, and Members of the Finance Committee,

I am presenting Senate Bill 510 which makes changes in the licensing and educational requirements for funeral directors in Maryland, making it more feasible for those desiring a career solely as a funeral director to become licensed.

Currently, Maryland recognizes a distinction in two different professions: morticians and funeral directors. Morticians, who handle bodies and perform services such as embalming, are required to take a variety of science courses, as one would expect. However, funeral directors, who operate as coordinators in death care services, are not required to take these sort of technical classes. The intention is clear – the education should match the job description. Yet, the current state exam tests funeral director candidates on, both, arts and sciences. As a result, students interested in this profession either find it more practicable to become licensed as a mortician or they forego both professional options altogether. Data provided by The Maryland Department of Health reflects this discrepancy, which shows 983 active licenses for morticians, but only 8 active licenses for funeral directors. By removing the requirement for a practical exam demonstrating competency in special mortuary sciences, the job of funeral directors is more accurately tested, and more students are likely to choose this educational pathway.

Why is this important? Well, there are three reasons. First, as noted, the statistics show that interest in becoming a funeral director is evidently waning, and there is a desire to boost recruitment. This bill will likely advance that goal by removing the barrier that dissuades students from selecting the profession. Second, numbers are not the only concern. We are also concerned with curating a diverse group of funeral directors. By relaxing the requirements, we may also attract a wider student body who may serve their own communities. As many faith systems do not observe practices implemented by morticians, such as embalming, funeral director services may be more appropriate. Third, regardless of faith-based practices, the need to qualify every professional in death care services as a mortician simply is not there. The types of

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services, such as embalming, which require a mortician's license, are becoming increasingly less popular. In fact, the National Funeral Directors Association has predicted, based on current market trends, that nearly 80% of the U.S. population will choose cremation services, which can be handled by funeral directors.

Is there a downfall to relaxing these requirements? Virginia, in passing similar legislation in recent years, recognized a virtue in requiring funeral directors to be educated in the science behind death care. It is important for funeral directors to understand diseases and how to handle remains. They need to be able to properly explain the process of taking care of a loved one to their family. To rectify this issue, the Virginia bill included a provision, requiring funeral director candidates to undertake coursework in pathology. SB510 adopts this policy as well.

The intent of the law in Maryland is clear in distinguishing funeral directors from morticians. State exams should accurately reflect this distinction, and current trends and resident demographics require us to open the door for those interested in becoming funeral directors.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 510 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.