



February 16, 2026

**Subject: Opposition to House Bill 0698**

Dear Delegates,

I am writing to respectfully express my opposition to House Bill 0698, currently before the House Health Committee.

As a licensed funeral director and member of the Maryland funeral service community, I am deeply concerned that this legislation, as drafted, will diminish the value of licensed funeral establishments, create regulatory confusion, and fundamentally alter the professional structure that protects Maryland consumers.

While we are neutral on the transfer of regulatory authority for crematories from the Office of Cemetery Oversight to the State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors, several provisions in this bill raise serious concerns:

**1. Inclusion of Alkaline Hydrolysis in the Definition of Crematory**

The bill includes alkaline hydrolysis within the definition of “crematory.” This is inappropriate and will create consumer confusion. Alkaline hydrolysis is a distinct process and should either have its own statutory section or, at minimum, be classified under “reduction facilities.” Conflating it with traditional flame cremation misleads consumers and muddies regulatory clarity.

**2. Expansion of Preneed Sales Authority**

The bill expands the law to allow stand-alone crematories and Natural Organic Reduction Facilities to sell preneed contracts. Under current law (Health Occupations §7-504), preneed sales are limited to licensed funeral directors, morticians, and surviving spouses of licensees.

This expansion would fundamentally undermine the funeral profession in Maryland. Preneed arrangements are not merely sales transactions — they involve fiduciary responsibilities, consumer protections, and professional oversight. Allowing stand-alone disposal facilities to sell preneed contracts shifts funeral service away from professional care and toward commoditized disposition services. This will erode professional standards and reduce consumer protections.

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### **3. Mandatory CPA-Certified Financial Filings**

The bill requires crematories and affiliated companies to submit CPA-certified financial statements to the Board. This mandate is unnecessary, overly intrusive, and compels disclosure of confidential financial information without clear justification. Existing oversight mechanisms already provide adequate consumer protection.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 0698 unless these problematic provisions are removed or substantially amended.

Maryland families deserve thoughtful, professional funeral care governed by clear, consistent regulations — not statutory changes that destabilize a long-standing professional framework.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our state.

Respectfully,

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