

March 20, 2015

To: Jan Nordlund, Committee Administrator
House Committee on Business and Labor

Re: HB 3243 Indigent Disposition

Chair Holvey and members of the House Committee on Business and Labor:

For the record my name is Wally Ordeman and I'm a funeral director from Albany and represent the Oregon Funeral Directors Association.

A summary of the history of the indigent disposition fund, as well as the goals of this legislation has been provided previously, so I can be very brief with my thoughts. The OFDA has had concerns for many years about the consistency of this program, and the fragmented management of the fund, which was created to ease the financial burden of caring for those who pass away in this state and have nobody to take responsibility and pay for disposition.

Through Representative Hoyle, House Bill 3243 has been crafted so that we can narrow the definition of "indigent," and expand the criteria in which funeral providers must follow in applying to the fund. These concepts for the bill have come from many sources within the industry, not the least of which was a very well attended strategic planning session hosted by the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery board last summer, in which excellent data was collected and very diverse opinions were heard.

The OMCB anticipates that they can manage this program with no current increase to the death certificate filing fee, and we encourage the shift of this program to the oversight of the OMCB without reservation.

Since the bill was introduced, there has been some good discussion that has brought about the need for a dash 1 amendment. Some of those improvements include:

Adding a 3rd level of possible responsible parties who have refused to participate and pay, such as a neighbor, friend, or church (narrows the definition).

Adding two steps the funeral service practitioner must follow by requiring contact with State Lands to use their resources to locate possible controlling parties, and also the VA to inquire about veteran status and possible benefits (expands the criteria).

Removing OHSU Demonstrator of Anatomy as responsible position for maintaining list of potential body donation recipients. Inserts OMCB in that role.

Placing less burden on funeral director for locating controlling parties when Medical Examiner has better resources for doing that.

Directing teaching embalming labs to return indigent cases to funeral establishments, so that funeral establishments can apply to fund, and teaching institutions don't have the disposition burden. (MHCC).

Adding the death certificate filing fee back into statutory language, rather than making it vulnerable through rulemaking.

The OFDA is not aware of any opposition to this bill, and has worked very hard with all known stakeholders to make this good law. Funeral directors throughout the state understand that indigent cases need to be cared for. We are a compassionate industry by nature and understand dignity and respect. Our goal for the indigent disposition fund is consistency. It will never be about profit from this fund.

Thank you so much for your time, and I'd be more than happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Wally Ordeman
Fisher Funeral Home, Albany
Oregon Funeral Directors Association