

HB 2574 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Business and Labor

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Meeting Dates: 3/1

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Clarifies permissibility of disposition of human bodies by alternative authorized processes that include alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction. Clarifies authority of Mortuary and Cemetery Board to license and regulate alternative disposition facilities. Replaces "cremated" or "incinerated" remains with "reduced" remains throughout statutes. Becomes operative July 1, 2022.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Modifies definition of alternative disposition facility. Restores references to "cremation" and adds "alternative disposition" when cremation is referenced (rather than replacing "cremation" with "reduced remains" as the original bill did).

BACKGROUND:

Oregon statutes generally contemplate the disposition of human remains either through cremation or leaving the body whole for burial or entombment. Cremation uses direct flame and heat to reduce remains to bone fragments. Crematories are licensed and regulated by the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board. Alternative methods to reduce human remains have been developed, but are not expressly allowed in Oregon. Two such alternative methods are gaining interest: hydrolysis and natural organic reduction. Hydrolysis uses water, pressure, relatively lower heat than cremation, and an alkaline agent to reduce the human remains to bone fragments and essential elements. Natural organic reduction uses a contained environment to which straw, wood chips and other natural materials are added to convert the human remains to soil.

House Bill 2574 clarifies that it is permissible that disposition of remains occur through alternative authorized processes such as hydrolysis, natural organic reduction, and any other process approved by the Mortuary and Cemetery Board.