

6/1/15

Senate committee on Human Services and Early Childhood

Senator Sara Gelsler, Chair

Re: HB 3243 (Indigent Disposition)

Thank you Chair Gelsler and members of the committee. For the record my name is Wally Ordeman and I'm a 5<sup>th</sup> generation funeral director from Albany, and the contract lobbyist for the Oregon Funeral Directors Association (OFDA).

The funeral directors in your communities are grateful that the OFDA and numerous other stakeholders have crafted this proposed remedy to the frustrating and vague program of taking care of indigent deaths in Oregon. HB3243 addresses situations where no responsible party is found, or where a responsible party is found but they absolve themselves from any responsibility. This bill does the following:

**Transfers the responsibility of this program to the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board (OMCB), who already has entered into an interagency agreement with OHA to manage parts of this program. This step alone eliminates 2 layers of administration with this program.**

**Tightens the criteria for funeral homes to follow, by requiring notification to State Lands as well as the VA.**

**Maintains the requirement that funeral homes offer the deceased to educational institutions.**

**Extends the timeframe from 5 days to 10 days to allow more time for responsible parties to be identified.**

**Allows the funeral director to move forward with disposition when no responsible party is identified, or responsible parties have acquiesced, and then subsequently apply to the fund.**

**Provides for the OMCB to more accurately predict the number of claims expected, and therefore provide a more consistent payout from the fund to applicants.**

(Currently the fund collects a month's worth of fees from the death certificate filing fee, and then divides that pool of fees by the number of claims in that particular month, thus "zeroing out" the fund every month. Payouts might range from \$28 to the max of \$650 in any particular month.)

**More clearly defines "indigent." There may never be a perfect definition of indigent. However, this bill provides the strongest language to-date and gives tangible guidance to funeral directors who are placed in the position of caring for these people.**

This bill does not change the manner in which these seemingly anonymous citizens are taken care of in death. If anything it strengthens the ability of funeral directors, medical examiners, and the State of Oregon to care for these folks.

The Oregon Funeral Directors see this bill as a way to reduce vagueness in the way the indigent fund is administered, a way to receive more predictable reimbursements, a way to preserve the dignity of these seemingly anonymous Oregonians, a way to prevent presumably responsible parties from just defaulting to the fund, and a way to administer the fund more efficiently.

In short, this bill has been a long time in the making and is a positive step toward defining the use of the fund. It's been the collaborative effort of many entities, and comes before the legislature after countless industry meetings, including the OMCB's summer strategic planning meeting in 2014, in which there were industry members present from all death care disciplines. Opposition to this legislation doesn't appear to come from anyone who can actually use the fund.

The Oregon Funeral Directors Association strongly encourages this committee to move this bill to the Senate Floor with a resounding "do pass" recommendation. Your constituent funeral directors deserve it, and so do the indigent citizens of your communities.

Respectfully,

Wally Ordeman  
Oregon Funeral Directors Association

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