



January 5, 2021

Representative Joe Sanfelippo
Chair, Assembly Committee on Health
Wisconsin State Capitol

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Health,

My name is Erin Longmire and I am the Executive Director of the Funeral Service & Cremation Alliance of Wisconsin, which is a professional trade association representing funeral directors and funeral homes throughout the state. I am here today to support AB 1, specifically the language within the bill that would ease regulations relating to the disposition of human remains.

The funeral profession is facing an unprecedented amount of deaths right now. Wisconsin is not only seeing an increased number of deaths relating to COVID-19, but the overall death rate is also up. For example, the amounts of suicides and overdose deaths are 15% greater than they were in 2019. This has caused a strain on mortuary services in the state. Funeral directors across Wisconsin are experiencing issues related to both throughput and the storage of bodies. Throughput is the process by which a deceased individual goes from death to final disposition. When there is an increase in the death rate, there is an increased stress on the throughput of individuals in the system. This increase then creates issues related to the storage of bodies. Our funeral homes are at or over capacity for storage in all areas of the state, which causes a strain on the system.

AB 1 would help to eliminate some of the requirements that can slow throughput and therefore create issues relating to body storage. Specifically, the bill would require that if any physician, coroner, or medical examiner has signed the death certificate of a deceased person and listed COVID-19 as the underlying cause of death, a coroner or medical examiner shall issue a cremation permit to cremate the corpse of that deceased person without viewing the corpse. The bill would also require that if a physician, coroner, or medical examiner has signed the death certificate of a deceased person and listed COVID-19 as the underlying cause of death, a coroner or medical examiner shall issue, within 48 hours after the time of death, a cremation permit for the cremation of a corpse of a deceased person. These provisions were both included in Act 185 during the 2019-2020 legislative session and are necessary to maintain public health while still providing dignity to the decedent and their loved ones during these unprecedented times.

At a time when it is imperative that our state's mortuary system works, AB 1 will help ease on the constraints currently in place. On behalf of Wisconsin's funeral professionals, we ask that you please again pass this language.

Sincerely,

Erin Longmire
FSCA Executive Director

FSCA

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