

## Memorial Funeral Homes

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May 4, 2025

Dear Representative McGaw:

Thank you for taking the time to create and support the bills H5110 and S195. The passing of these bills will offer more environmentally responsible options for final disposition to the constituents of Rhode Island by way of Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) and Alkaline Hydrolysis (AH). As people who work in death care services, we care very much about the future of the legislation you have brought forward for consideration. We want the families of Rhode Island to have all the options of final disposition available to them and we want to be part of the process to make sure these options are reasonably available. We recognize that providing the families we serve with options is not the only reason to legalize both methods of disposition in Rhode Island, the conversation around climate change has become rather urgent and we would like to play a role in minimizing the impact that death care has on the planet and our atmosphere.

As an example of where Alkaline Hydrolysis is being used, The Board of Directors for the Cremation Association of North America (CANA), the largest association of cremation professionals, chose to expand their definition of cremation to include Alkaline Hydrolysis in 2010. In our neighboring state of Connecticut, Alkaline Hydrolysis is already legal, and we have plans to visit the first facility opened, this month. The investment to get started with Alkaline Hydrolysis system is somewhere between \$300,000 and \$400,000 and it will likely fit in with many existing facilities. The equipment does not take up much space, and other than plumbing and electricity there are no other state permits required if it is included in the state definition of Cremation, other than those of local zoning and building jurisdictions. Not only is AH a responsible option but it is also a financially feasible alternative that can be in place quickly. We are hearing from our funeral directors, pre-planning specialists, and eldercare lawyers in the area that families have started asking them about these options. Looking at how many other states have already legalized these technologies; with our state's approval we aim to help RI funeral providers with the chance to keep up with the needs of our client families and prevent having to outsource to other states. To open the

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doors to two truly environmentally responsible options for the residents of RI is our goal.

In addition to the state legislative level, we know there will be more work to follow, and we hope to support those efforts as well. We assume there would need to be other policies and regulations at the Board of Funeral Service and the Department of Health, updating their definitions of cremation and other documents related to final disposition and Public Health.

While we also support the idea of NOR in Rhode Island as we have seen other states make the necessary updates to legislation for this option, we also need to recognize there is a significant investment of time and money to acquire land, get permits, and finally construct and open a facility to serve families who desire this option. To our knowledge as of this writing there are no readily available Natural Organic Reduction systems available for purchase. The overhead costs for building a NOR facility are upwards of a million dollars, which is a significant investment especially for small family-owned businesses like most funeral homes in RI. In the effort to offer more options to the families of RI, we believe including Alkaline Hydrolysis alongside Natural Organic Reduction makes sense for the families of Rhode Island.

We hope this information will assist you in your efforts to inform your peers enough to pass the bill.

Sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'Kurt' and the second signature on the right is 'Kim Shute'.

Kurt Edenbach and Kim Shute

Memorial Funeral Homes, Inc.