

Testimony in Favor of H7070

To House Corporations Committee,

My name is Jessie Kingston, retired, I live in Providence . I've been a member of Climate Action Rhode Island for ten years, advocating for healthier, cleaner, more equitable solutions to the very real, negative effects of pollutants and more in our environment.

That is one of the primary reasons I am testifying in favor of this bill, particularly the portion relating to Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) briefly defined in page 3, line 7, (16) . I'm also in favor of Alkaline hydrolysis although that will not be my focus here.

As stated in this bill, a Natural Organic Reduction Facility page 3, line 9, (17) where NOR can take place can be not only a structure but also a "space in ... *real property* (my italics) where natural organic reduction of a body occurs". In other words, that real property is outside, in the ground, the wiser way.

This is a wiser way because NOR is exponentially more environmentally friendly than the more traditional methods of disposing of the human body (cremation or embalming and burial.). Put simply, NOR allows nutrients from our bodies to be released and absorbed by the soil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions caused by cremation and without the unfathomable quantity of poisonous formaldehyde which is pumped onto and then leeches out of embalmed bodies. Biodegradable caskets , or simple shrouds and blankets are used in NOR.

Cemeteries in the United States take up an estimated one million acres of land, enough casket steel to build over two thousand Empire State buildings and use wood equal to four million acres of forests.

Last spring I made a trip to Prudence Island specifically to tour Prudence Memorial Park, "the first exclusively green cemetery in Rhode Island". Instead of taking time here, I will include a link in case you are interested in this unique resting place that looks more like a verdant field than a traditional cemetery.

<https://prudencememorialpark.com/>

I mention Prudence Island and the next example because, perhaps like others, I was not familiar with the idea of NOR until fairly recently.

The historic Swan Point Cemetery also offers a green burial option. Their website put it succinctly:

“Green burial has become increasingly popular as concern for the environment has grown. It is a natural burial process by which all components going into the earth are biodegradable.”

<https://swanpointcemetery.com/green-natural-burial/about-green-natural-burial/>

NOR is legal in at least 13 states while alkaline hydrolysis is legal in quite a few more. These less toxic options should be available to Rhode Islanders as well.

Thank you to the sponsors of this straight forward, sensible legislation. And thank you for considering my input.