

January 27, 2026

Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Corporations Committee
State House, Room 230A
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Solomon,

We respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 7070 for the 2026 legislative session. If passed, this bill would expand final disposition options available to Rhode Island families by permitting Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) and Alkaline Hydrolysis (AH).

As professionals working in death care services, our role is to serve families from a wide range of religious, cultural, and personal backgrounds. Our responsibility is to provide services that reflect each family's needs and values at the time of death. This bill simply allows additional methods of final disposition for families seeking an alternative to the currently available options of traditional burial and flame cremation.

Alkaline hydrolysis is currently legal in twenty-eight states, and natural organic reduction in thirteen. In neighboring Connecticut, alkaline hydrolysis is already legal and actively in operation, and Vermont is the closest state to legalize natural organic reduction. Rhode Island families are already accessing these services outside the state.

Within the profession, alkaline hydrolysis is well established. In 2010, the Board of Directors of the Cremation Association of North America (CANA), the largest association of cremation professionals, expanded its definition of cremation to include alkaline hydrolysis. We have partnered with a Connecticut funeral home that offers this service and have already served several Rhode Island families who selected that method.

From an operational standpoint, alkaline hydrolysis is a practical service for many funeral providers and ready to implement. The initial investment in equipment is approximately \$300,000 to \$400,000. These systems are designed to fit within many existing facilities, require minimal space, and do not require additional state permits beyond standard plumbing, electrical, zoning, and building approvals. This allows for timely and well-regulated implementation. While Natural Organic Reduction is a viable option, it may require a higher initial investment and additional time to establish operations in Rhode Island.

Alkaline hydrolysis can be implemented using existing regulatory oversight and staffing, whereas natural organic reduction would reasonably require additional time and resources to establish appropriate state-level infrastructure.

If alkaline hydrolysis were available in Rhode Island, families would benefit from local oversight, continuity of care, and fewer logistical challenges during an already difficult time. Additionally, offering these services in-state would allow Rhode Island businesses to retain revenue that is currently leaving the state. We are hearing from funeral directors, pre-planning specialists, and eldercare attorneys throughout the region that families are increasingly asking about these options. With the state's approval, Rhode Island funeral providers would be better positioned to respond to this growing interest locally.

It is also notable that water cremation is already being offered locally for pets. In a WPRI article about a Providence-based facility, the co-owner stated, "We believe that how we care for our pets in life should be reflected in how we honor them in death—losing a beloved pet is a heartbreaking experience, and saying goodbye should be done with love, dignity and respect." The same principles of care, dignity, and respect apply to human remains.

We recognize that passage of this bill is an initial step. Additional work will be required at the Board of Funeral Service and the Department of Health, including updates to definitions and regulations related to final disposition and public health. We would welcome the opportunity to assist with this process and to share professional insight as these policies are developed. Legislators also have the benefit of established statutory language and regulatory frameworks from other states that have already implemented these practices.

Change can be challenging, and public understanding takes time. This bill does not alter or remove existing practices. Burial and flame cremation will remain available for families who prefer them. House Bill 7070 simply expands the range of services that may be offered in Rhode Island.

We hope this testimony is helpful as you consider this legislation, and we respectfully urge support for House Bill 7070.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kurt' followed by a stylized flourish.

Kurt Edenbach and Kim Shute

Memorial Funeral Homes
375 Broadway, Newport, RI