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TTY: 771
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March 12, 2026

The Honorable Melissa A. Murray, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: S 2850 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions -- Funeral Director/Embalmer and Funeral Service Establishment

Dear Chair Murray:

Please accept this letter regarding S 2850, legislation that would reduce funeral home and crematory inspections from twice a year to once a year and would remove the requirement that the practical exam be conducted in Rhode Island for out-of-state funeral directors and embalmer applicants. This legislation was introduced at the request of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH).

The purpose of the proposed legislation is to allow acceptance of out-of-state licenses without requiring applicants to take a practical examination in Rhode Island. Rhode Island will still require that a practical examination is completed, but it does not have to be done in Rhode Island. The issue was raised to RIDOH in an instance when, for example, a Florida funeral home needs to file a death certificate in Rhode Island. Currently, a Rhode Island license is required to access RIDOH's electronic vital records system, but a Florida-licensed funeral home director cannot obtain the required Rhode Island license without physically travelling to Rhode Island to complete the required practical examination. Similarly, Massachusetts funeral home interns who do their internship in Massachusetts and are seeking to get a Rhode Island license need to take a practical examination in Rhode Island, but they would be prohibited from working on a Rhode Island decedent because they are not an intern in Rhode Island. For those that are willing to travel to Rhode Island to complete the practical, it is difficult for them to find a funeral home director that has the time to oversee the practical examination.

The implementation of RIDOH's electronic vital records system, which requires a Rhode Island license, is preventing out-of-state funeral homes who serve deceased Rhode Islanders (such as those from Massachusetts and Florida) from accessing the vital records system to file the appropriate and necessary records. RIDOH has received applications by endorsement from Florida, Texas, and Massachusetts funeral home directors who are having difficulty arranging for a practical examination in Rhode Island. This change will ensure that the information and data in RIDOH's electronic vital records system accurately reflects Rhode Island deaths.

We are also seeking to reduce inspections from twice a year to once a year for funeral homes and crematories to save on resources and bring our practice in closer alignment with other states.

Maine conducts random inspections. Connecticut requires annual inspection. New Hampshire requires inspections every three years. Some states specify no frequency for inspections.

It is for these reasons that RIDOH encourages the Committee's favorable consideration of this legislation. We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions the Committee may have regarding S 2850.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome M. Larkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Kristen Silvia, Director of Legislation and Deputy Chief of Staff
Patricia Resende, Director of Senate Policy