



House Human Services Committee

March, 21st 2023

Support SB 2139

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee. For the record my name is Mike Krumwiede and I represent the North Dakota Funeral Directors Association. We are here today in support of SB 2139. Our association currently has just over 100 Funeral Directors who represent 63 of the 75 Funeral Homes in North Dakota. The bill you see before you arose from a situation that came about from the creation of Human Services Zones. In the past Indigent Burial reimbursement rates were negotiated between funeral directors and the county in which they worked. Once the zones were established, we ended up with multiple policies with multiple rates in each zone. This bill as it was introduced looks to correct this issue by having one rate across all zones and to simplify the process to include cremation only. Unfortunately, the bill was amended in the Senate and the original intent was tweaked slightly. The biggest issue is the changes made on pages 5 and 6 where it was added to allow for burial due to a religious exemption while simultaneously changing the language around nominal amounts allowed to help with burial costs. This will now allow for burials but takes away the ability for an amount to be used to help offset the cost of the burial. We brought a couple of amendments that if either one was used would effectively address our concerns. The first proposed amendment, and probably easiest, would add a rate for burials so that at least when a burial is allowed for a religious exemption that the Funeral Director would receive a dollar amount that better meets the actual costs to the funeral home. The other amendment we proposed would restore the language around cremation from the original bill and nominal language for burials.

For these reasons, we respectfully request to amend and when amended would request Do Pass recommendation on SB 2139. It's now my pleasure to ask a member of our Funeral Directors Association to provide some more detailed testimony with real world applications in support of SB 2139. Thank you for your time.