



PO Box 926, Gardiner, ME 04345 • www.MaineFuneralDirectors.org • 207-729-9100 • info@mainefuneraldirectors.org

April 4, 2023

Senator Joe Baldacci, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Re: LD 536 *An Act to Provide Natural Organic Reduction Facilities for Maine Residents for the Conversion of Human Remains to Soil*
LD 584 *An Act to Permit the Conduct of Open Air Cremation at Designated Sites*
LD 762 *An Act to Authorize Burials with Biodegradable Containers, Including Tree Pods*

Dear Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Christopher Ladner, and I am fortunate to serve as the President of the Maine Funeral Directors Association, a statewide organization of licensed funeral directors that started over 100 years ago. Our mission is to advance the highest level of ethical and professional standards in funeral service for the families we serve.

It is often said that we in funeral service serve the dead but focus on the living. We honor and celebrate the life of the deceased in the sanctity of the ceremony to support the remaining family and friends as they work through their grieving process. Here in Maine, we have hundreds of years of traditions and ceremonies we offer to the families we serve. We recognize that other cultures also have many years of traditions that may be different from ours but what we share is a belief in the sanctity of ceremony as a means of passage for the deceased and a pathway for healing for those of us who remain behind.

The three bills referenced above add another method for the final disposition of human remains to Maine's current methods of disposition that are authorized and regulated under Maine law. Funeral practice, including the final disposition of human remains, is heavily regulated in Maine for very good reasons. These regulations focus on consumer protection, public health, public safety, and environmental protection.

While the MFDA is Neither For Nor Against the passage of these three bills, we urge the committee to require that these proposed processes for the disposition of human remains are as heavily regulated as currently regulated means of disposition. Just a few of the aspects of regulation to consider include:

- Compliance with:
 - Environmental regulations regarding air and water protections including the process for treatment of any remaining residue
 - Rules related to the Office of Vital Statistics
 - Laws related to the location of structures that hold or contain dead human bodies
- Sign off from the Medical Examiner's Office as to the cause of death for public safety concerns
- Licensing requirements for personnel and employees
- Operator and employee protection and training under OSHA for example

Finally, we ask that any rules promulgated in reference to this bill be deemed Substantive rather than Routine Technical so that they come back to this committee for approval. On behalf of Maine Funeral Directors, I thank you for your service to our State, and we are here as a resource for you all whenever you may need us.

Grateful in Service,

Christopher Ladner