

REMARKS
by **George P. Connick, Ph.D.**
to the
Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
regarding
**“LD 19: An Act to Authorize the National Institute of Funeral Service
to Grant Associate Degrees”**
February 2, 2023

GOOD AFTERNOON.

My name is George Connick and my wife and I live in Freeport, Maine.

Let me begin with a bit of information about my background which I hope will help to put in context my brief remarks.

My career in higher education spans the past 65 years and the first 32 years were spent here in Maine in the University System where

I have had the privilege of serving in a number of faculty and administrative capacities in the University of Maine System such as:

Director of Academic Planning for the merger of the Portland Campus and Gorham State College;

Academic Vice President at the University of Southern Maine;

President of the University of Maine at Augusta for 10 years;

and President of the Education Network of Maine (the University System’s distance learning network) until I retired in 1997.

Following retirement, I changed focus a bit.

from 2000 until 2006

I was the Executive Director of the

American Board of Funeral Service Education,

the national accrediting organization for the 58 funeral education programs in the U.S.

Then, in 2006, I became the

Executive Vice President of

American Academy of Funeral Service in New York City and

from 2019 to 2021 I served as its President

and then I retired fully.

These years of higher education experience have taught me that there are essentially three major public policy issues involved in the planning of new education initiatives:

First is ACCESS.

Who benefits?

Who is the competition?

How will it be offered

And dozens or hundreds of additional questions that must be answered.

Second is QUALITY.

Who defines it?

How is it measured?

Who ensures it?

Third is COST.

What will it cost?

Who pays?

Is it worth the cost?

The Self-Study that President Lentz has prepared documents in detail that these policy issues and the underlying planning and operational details have all been addressed.

The fact that she has the educational background and 25 years professional experience as a

Funeral Director,

a Funeral Education Instructor,

and a DEAN

are precisely the qualifications one would look for to start a new funeral service program.

Finally, from my experience as Executive Director of the accrediting association for funeral service, I can assure you that this program is needed and will be well-received. Maine, NH and VT DO NOT have a funeral education program and there are only 2 in Massachusetts and neither are easily accessible.

Maine will be the beneficiary of an ACCESSIBLE, HIGH QUALITY, and COST EFFECTIVE new and needed associate degree program and the State of Maine won't have to spend a dime to develop or offer it.

I am delighted to recommend this bill for passage so this program can begin soon.