



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

Testimony in Support of LD 562
An Act to Update Reimbursement Rates for Transportation of Deceased Persons by Funeral Homes When the Transport is at the Request of the Chief Medical Examiner

March 25, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Rep. Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Joseph Kiley, I live in Holden and own and operate Kiley & Foley Funeral Service in Bangor and Brewer and my business serves the greater Bangor/Brewer community. I have been a licensed funeral practitioner since the early 90's and I am here today on behalf of the Maine Funeral Directors Association (MFDA) in support of LD 562

The State of Maine and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in Augusta developed a system in the 1980s for investigating deaths that fall under their jurisdiction. This system is a cooperative where funeral homes transport human remains from the place of death to Augusta for required exams and are reimbursed for transportation costs. Since then, local funeral homes/practitioners have become the point of contact for families that have experienced a death involving the OCME and the funeral home becomes a facilitator/intermediary with the OCME, local law enforcement and the decedent's families. This long standing relationship and understanding of each other's role and this process is generally smooth and trouble free.

Transportation reimbursement rates have not been adjusted since 2011 and prior to that since 1998. Some of the typical factors that have driven cost upward for providing this transport service is vehicle cost and maintenance, fuel, insurance, labor, licensing and training costs.

This bill was brought before this committee in the 131st Legislature and was voted unanimously OTP out of committee. It ultimately did not survive through appropriations so we bring this important bill to you again. Since last year, as you may know, there have been some positive developments with the OCME. There is a new facility being built to accommodate a greater need for forensic service and more advanced testing. We also have a new Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Alice Briones, who is from Maine, has some impressive credentials having served as the head of the medical examiner system for the Dept of Defense and she and her staff are putting great emphasis on maintaining forensic accreditation, doing more scientific identification when necessitated and emergency preparedness. With this being said, our association and, I believe, the funeral practitioners around the state, are proud of the continued working relationship with the medical examiner's office that has been developed over a long period of time.

Funeral practitioners across the state are hopeful that this committee understands the need to address these rates so that funeral homes are not continuing to absorb these costs. Without an increase in rates, we may begin to lose some cooperation with these transport services that will ultimately affect its efficiency and Maine families. We thank you for your consideration as we ask for your support for this increase that support the medical examiner system. I would be happy to answer any questions about this process or any related specifics.

Sincerely,
Joseph Kiley