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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

Position: Support

Testimony By:

Adam Walker, President - Maine Funeral Directors Association

March 25, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Rep. Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Adam Walker, and writing to you today as President of the Maine Funeral Directors Association 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.”

Funeral service practitioners across the state play a crucial role in assisting the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in transporting deceased persons with dignity and professionalism. However, the reimbursement rates currently in place do not reflect the true costs of providing this essential service.

Background and Need for LD 562

- The last increase in transportation reimbursement rates occurred in 2011. Before that, the rates had not been adjusted since 1998.
- Since the last increase, the costs of labor, fuel, vehicle maintenance, licensing fees, and insurance have risen significantly. The price of a removal vehicle alone has increased from \$24,000 in 2011 to over \$30,000 today.
- Many funeral homes are currently providing this service at a financial loss, which threatens the ability of practitioners to continue offering this critical support to the OCME and Maine families.

Why This Matters

1. Ensuring Funeral Homes Can Sustain This Service

- Many funeral homes operate on thin margins, and absorbing transportation costs at a loss is unsustainable. Without appropriate reimbursement, some practitioners may no

longer be able to provide this service, which would create challenges for the OCME and delay crucial forensic investigations.

2. Supporting Families in Difficult Times

- Funeral practitioners are often the first professionals' families interact with after a loss. They provide compassion, dignity, and reassurance while navigating complex and emotional situations. Without this support, Maine families may face additional stress and logistical burdens.

3. Maintaining Public Safety and OCME Operations

- If funeral homes can no longer afford to provide transportation, the burden will fall on local governments or law enforcement agencies, leading to increased costs and logistical challenges.

- Timely transportation is crucial for forensic examinations, criminal investigations, and public health assessments. Delays could have serious consequences.

Legislation History and the Need for Action

This legislation was unanimously supported by the Health and Human Services Committee in the 131st Maine Legislature, but it ultimately died in the Special Appropriations Table, due to budget constraints. We ask this committee to once again approve this legislation with LD 562 and ensure that it receives the necessary funding this session.

The Maine Funeral Directors Association strongly supports LD 562 because it provides a fair, necessary, and long-overdue adjustment to reimbursement rates. Maine's funeral practitioners are committed to supporting the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, law enforcement, and most importantly, Maine families in their most difficult moments. However, they cannot continue to absorb these costs at a loss.

We respectfully ask the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 562 to ensure funeral practitioners are fairly reimbursed for their essential services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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