

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND
CONSUMER PROTECTION**



Public Hearing on

**B26-47, the “Funeral Directors Licensing Reform Amendment Act of 2025”
B26-547, the “Green Death Care Options Amendment Act of 2025”**

Written Testimony of
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Before
The Honorable Chrsitina Henderson, Chairperson
The Committee on Health
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Monday, March 23, 2026, at 12:30 p.m., Room 500

Good afternoon, Chairperson Henderson, members of the Committee on Health (Committee) and staff. I am Tiffany Crowe, Director of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP). I am joined today by Board of Funeral Directors (Board) Chairperson, John McGuire. We are happy to appear before the Committee this afternoon to discuss B26-47, the “Funeral Directors Licensing Reform Amendment Act of 2025” and B26-547, the “Green Care Option Amendment Act of 2025”.

DLCP’s mission is to protect the economic interests of businesses, residents, and visitors of the District of Columbia (District) by issuing business and occupational and professional licenses, and investigating and enforcing the Consumer Protection Procedures Act. DLCP licenses and regulates the non-health occupations set forth in D.C. Official Code § 47-2853.04(a). We do this with the assistance of our boards and commissions. DLCP oversees nine boards and commissions, including the Board of Funeral Directors.

The Board protects the health, safety, and welfare of District residents and consumers by licensing funeral directors, funeral services establishments, and funeral director apprentices, and approving courtesy cards for funeral directors licensed in Maryland and Virginia. The Board plays a central role in responding to consumer complaints and takes disciplinary action as appropriate. Additionally, the Board, as experts in the funeral industry, makes recommendations to the Mayor

on legislative and regulatory amendments to the District’s funeral licensing laws and regulations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on B26-47 and B26-547. DLCP and the Board generally support the intent of both bills, which we believe would increase opportunities for funeral license professionals and families. We have a few recommendations and clarifying questions that we would like for the Committee to consider. We believe that our concerns can be addressed by working with the Committee during markup.

I will address the more substantive items in my testimony, beginning with B26-47, the “Funeral Directors Licensing Reform Amendment Act of 2025”.

Bill 26-47, the “Funeral Directors Licensing Reform Amendment Act of 2025”

Bill 26-47, the “Funeral Directors Licensing Reform Amendment Act of 2025” would create new licensing and employment opportunities within the funeral industry. Specifically, the legislation would amend the licensing requirements for a funeral director by (a) removing the high school or graduate equivalency degree requirement; (b) revising the education requirements for those who have graduated from a school of mortuary science or funeral services, or who have obtained an associate’s degree or its equivalent; and (c) replacing the funeral director apprenticeship requirement with a funeral director internship.

Additionally, the B26-47 would create a new embalmer's license and amend the definition of "practice of funeral services" and add a new term and definition – "funeral services". Further, the bill would replace the existing funeral director apprentice license with a certification as a funeral director intern or embalmer intern. Lastly, B26-47 would make technical amendments to the District of Columbia Funeral Services Regulatory Act of 1984.

Again, we support the intent of the legislation, which is to create economic opportunities for those seeking to become licensed to practice in the funeral industry. Since becoming the Director of DLCP, I, along with the boards and commissions, have been committed to identifying ways to help District residents to obtain their occupational and professional licenses by removing arduous barriers to licensure, while at the same time ensuring consumers are protected. In addition to removing barriers, we have been steadfast in our commitment to ensuring the District's licensing laws and regulations are current and align with national trends. Bill 26-47 aligns with our goals, but as drafted, we have a few concerns and recommendations.

We generally support the bill's goal of amending the requirements for obtaining a Funeral Director License. For example, we support the Council's intent to revise the education requirements for those who have graduated from a school of mortuary science or funeral services. Presently, the law provides that the

applicant's coursework from an accredited school or college of mortuary science or funeral services whose course instruction is not less than 12 months or composed of not less than 840 hours of study. The bill's revision will allow more graduates of these programs to obtain a funeral director's license.

We also support the Council's clarifying the minimum course of study for those who complete an associate's degree. By requiring a minimum of 60 credit hours of coursework, of which at least 30 hours shall be in funeral directing, the bill will ensure the graduates have the foundation they will need to perform funeral directing services.

We recommend that the Council retain the high school diploma or GED as a requirement for licensure. It is currently not clear whether the Council intended to remove the high school diploma or its equivalent from the Code. One could assume that the applicant has a high school diploma or a GED if they have graduated from a school or college of mortuary science or obtained their associate's degree.

Funeral Directors have traditionally been, and continue to be, a highly respected professionals. Thus, we do not support reducing the license to solely offering funeral directing services at the expense of creating a new embalmer license. Creating new licensing opportunities is a goal that the Council, DLCP, and the Board all share. However, as drafted, the bill would limit funeral directors

to solely offering funeral directing services and the holders of the new embalmer license would only be allowed to carry out embalming services. Instead, we recommend the Council amend the bill to allow the holder of the funeral director's license to offer both funeral directing services and embalmings, while retaining the embalming license. This is similar to other states' practices, such as Maryland and New York, that have combination licenses. Further, to support expanded pathways to licensure, we recommend the Council include a provision that would allow the holder of an embalmer license to obtain a funeral director license; provided that, they satisfy the licensing requirements. With these changes, the District's funeral services laws would be consistent with other states' laws and provide economic opportunities for District residents seeking to enter the industry.

Finally, B26-47 would replace the funeral director apprenticeship license with the funeral director intern and embalmer intern certificates. Rather than create two separate internship programs, we recommend one program that would require an embalmer intern to be directly supervised by a licensed funeral director or licensed embalmer, and a funeral director intern to be directly supervised by a licensed funeral director.

Further, we recommend the bill is amended to retain the license requirement for interns as opposed to a certificate. The industry is familiar with the apprenticeship license and thus would easily adjust to the new intern licenses.

Also, providing applicants with a license that they can display while participating in their internship would give them more recognition and is more professional. Additionally, DLCP licensing staff are familiar with the apprenticeship license and will quickly adjust to reviewing these applications and issuing the licenses. Further, issuing a license as opposed to a certificate will also assist DLCP's investigators should the Board receive a complaint that they would need to investigate. Finally, it would be consistent with lines 178 through 187 of the bill, which would amend D.C. Official Code § 3-408 by authorizing the Mayor to deny a new or renewal license, or impose restrictions, fines, or to suspend or revoke a license if one engages misrepresentation or fraud in the conduct of the business of a funeral services establishment as a funeral director, embalmer or intern.

Additionally, the bill does not specify whether the intern should be enrolled in a school or college of mortuary science or in an associate's degree program, or if the intern must have graduated from either of these programs. We recommend the bill be amended to include this requirement as it currently exists in the law.

Lastly, the bill would require the intern and the supervising funeral director or embalmer to provide the Board with a report after completing 1,000 hours of training. The bill would require the intern to complete 2,000 training hours within two years, which may be extended up to five years for cause. As such, the intern and licensee would submit at least two reports to the Board during the duration of

the internship. This is burdensome to both the intern and supervising licensee and presents administrative challenges to the agency. We recommend they submit one report to the Board at the conclusion of the internship.

In addition to what has been previously mentioned, DLCP has a few additional recommendations related to oversight, compliance, and enforcement for the Council's consideration. First, I recommend the Council further amend D.C. Official Code § 3-408 to clarify that the enforcement authority in D.C. Official Code § 47-2853 is complimentary. This can be achieved by adding a new subsection (a-1) to read as follows:

“D.C. Official Code § 3-408(a-1) Notwithstanding subsection (a), the Board may refuse to approve or issue a renewal of a license, or impose a fine, or suspend or revoke a license, or take any other disciplinary action as set forth in D.C. Official Code § 47-2853.17(c).”

In addition, DLCP recommends the Council amend the legislation to address unclaimed cremated remains. The current law does not specify how long funeral services establishments must retain cremated remains before they are considered abandoned and can be destroyed. This omission may pose legal risk to funeral services establishments. Additionally, many funeral services establishments are facing storage shortages, which are exacerbated by having to keep cremated remains for an unspecified amount of time. Lastly, the law's silence has resulted

in disparities within the funeral services industry with funeral services establishments keeping the cremated remains for different lengths of time depending on their contractual terms. Consistency would not only benefit families but funeral services establishments as well.

By comparison, New York and Virginia allow for the disposal of cremated remains that are left unclaimed for at least 120 days. Several states have statutory minimum timeframes for how long a funeral services establishment must keep cremated remains. We recommend the Council amend the law to address this issue and provide clarity for consumers and practitioners.

Bill 26-547, the “Green Death Care Options Amendment Act of 2025”

Turning now to B26-547, the “Green Death Care Options Amendment Act of 205”. Bill 26-547 would authorize alkaline hydrolysis in the District and increase the composition of the Board from five members to seven, including an additional consumer member and expert in alkaline hydrolysis. We support the intent of B26-547, which will provide families with more options when a loved one dies as well as increase the services funeral services establishments offer, but recommend the Committee reach out to DC Water for its opinion as it relates to the impact, if any, the use of alkaline hydrolysis would have on the District’s water supply. Neither DLCP nor the Board have the expertise to weigh on this. We also

recommend the legislation be amended to include a provision requiring the Mayor to establish rules to implement the legislation.

Alkaline Hydrolysis, commonly referred to as “water cremation”, “flameless cremation”, or “aquamation” is said to be an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional cremation. Traditional cremation involves using intense heat (*i.e.*, 1600-1800° F) to reduce the human body to ashes. Conversely, alkaline hydrolysis reduces the human body to ashes by using 95% hot water (*i.e.*, 200-300° F) and 5% alkaline chemicals. Unlike traditional cremation, alkaline hydrolysis has lesser of an environmental impact.

Specifically, alkaline hydrolysis produces a lower amount of greenhouse gases (*e.g.*, CO₂) than flame-based cremation. Traditional cremation results in the emission of byproducts that include greenhouse gases, mercury, and other organic compounds into the air. Additionally, unlike with traditional cremation, the metal remains from alkaline hydrolysis (*e.g.*, pacemakers and cavities), can be recycled like regular metals.

Over 20 states authorize alkaline hydrolysis, including Maryland, which passed legislation in 2024. We encourage the Council to pass this legislation, which would ensure the District’s funeral services laws and regulations are keeping up with national trends and modern practices, while also increasing economic opportunities for those in the funeral industry.

Again, I want to thank the Committee for allowing me to testify on Bills 26-47 and 26-547, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.