

February 2, 2020

Oregon Legislature
House Business and Labor Committee
Representative Paul Holvey, Chair

Thank you Chair Holvey and members of the committee.

For the record my name is Wally Ordeman and I am the executive director of the Oregon Funeral Directors Association and a fifth generation funeral director from Albany. During my time as the contract lobbyist for OFDA, I was very involved in the reform and restructuring of the Indigent Disposition Program, and have worked closely with the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board staff as well as industry stakeholders on necessary revisions to the program including rulemaking.

Before addressing the fee increase brought about by HB2120, it's important to clarify how Oregon determines a deceased indigent person. While most Oregonians would define indigent as the down on their luck homeless person living under a bridge, Oregon statute takes a broader view. While the example given might qualify as indigent, or might not, the statute also includes situations where there is a next of kin and they can't be located, and also a pecking order of kinship that might qualify to control disposition but also can't be located. But the statute also makes one very clear distinction that can qualify the deceased as indigent: the family's inability to pay, **or their refusal to pay.** If the person or persons with the legal right to control disposition refuse to pay, or they distance themselves, or acquiesce, then the funeral home may initiate a claim to the IDP.

As you can imagine, this can periodically put a strain on the very necessary and vital IDP program through the ebb and flow of deaths in Oregon annually. While the IDP program doesn't make the funeral homes in your communities completely whole, it does fill a gap in those impossible situations where your local funeral directors are being asked to care for the deceased citizens of your communities with little or no reimbursement.

The monetary effects of HB2120 are projected to sustain the IDP for the next five years. This is a positive step for the 180 firms in the state that can utilize the fund. Periodic reviews can help make the fund more efficient, and continued education of the public and the industry on eligibility can reduce the overall number of claims. We would hope to use the next five years to do exactly that. In the meantime, the OFDA feels that the fee increase is fair and necessary and will be put to good use. We endorse the passage of HB2120.

Respectfully,
Wally Ordeman
Executive Director, Oregon Funeral Directors Association
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