

October 19th, 2023

To:  
Minnesota Representatives and Senators

Re:  
SF 2611  
HF 2509

Dear Legislature Members:

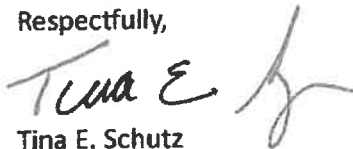
I am writing to express my support of the above-named bills currently under review in the MN Legislature. Like many other professions, funeral service is experiencing never before seen work force shortages, coupled with workplace burnout. This bill would go a long way in helping licensed funeral directors by allowing them to rely on a transfer specialist for just one step in the process of assisting that families that we serve. Like many other professions, adding a para-professional position seems like the best step forward at this time.

Currently, funeral directors in Minnesota must hold a license to transfer the deceased from their place of death, as well as make funeral arrangements with a family, embalm or otherwise care for the deceased, and supervise a funeral or burial. Here in Minnesota, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the licensure requirement for transfer of the deceased from the place of death was temporarily waived by MN-MDH, and unlicensed individuals were allowed to make these transfers. I saw no instances of anything inappropriate or unsafe with any transfers during this time and received no complaints from any of the families that we served – in fact, several families commented on how professional the team was.

Again, I am writing with my support of this legislation, but I do feel that the requirement of training and education for transfer care specialists is a key part of this bill. Any staff facilitating the transfer of the deceased needs to be trained on how to best make the transfers in a dignified and safe manner

Thank you.

Respectfully,



Tina E. Schutz  
Funeral Director and Owner  
Evans-Nordby Funeral Home, Inc.  
34 2<sup>nd</sup> St. NE  
Osseo, MN 55369

10-18-23

Assistant Commissioner Backstrom

Members of the MN Department of Health

Thank you for being willing to meet with us prior to yearend.

The shortage of available Funeral Directors to be available to go out on removals is very acute and has been prior to Covid. Since Covid many long-time directors with a wealth of experience and knowledge have left the business leaving a net loss with the replacement of newer directors. This is in the midst of continuing upward death care needs of Funeral Homes upon their own staff.

We are simply asking for help at this point. The last 3 years saw promises of a fix get pushed to the side of other priorities. The Department of Health recommendation last February of 2023 offered hope of safe have fix until the Legislature can address the issue. Unfortunately, that saw an unexpected withdrawal from recommendations that were implemented.

Please help this industry make it through another winter of elevated Death Care Needs by offering a safe haven that providers can utilize to bridge the industry to a Legislative Solution.

We can provide letters of support from customers and industry leaders to support such a bridge.

Thank you very much for your time and efforts thus far.

Sincerely

Todd P Anderson

Johnson Williams Funeral Car Service

August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To: Minnesota Department of Health

Re: SF 2611

HF 2509

To Whom It May Concern:

Please allow this letter to serve as UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT for the above mentioned Legislative Bills that were/will be proposed. Every business I know, regardless of type, is facing the challenge of staffing.

In the Funeral Industry, we are NOT exempt from this difficult situation.

There have been times when removal from the place of death is delayed for hours and even, at times, need to be declined as there are not enough people (licensed) to make the removals from the place of death. Can you imagine having a loved one pass away at home or a nursing facility and funeral homes not being able to respond in a timely matter, often for hours? Needless to say, this creates a very uncomfortable time for the families of the deceased and loss of business to many funeral homes. Backfilling the need with trained, but unlicensed, personnel is a very logical and simple solution. It is inevitable that this will occur in the future. My opinion is the SOONER THE BETTER. Para this and Para that are becoming the norm in many businesses. It is long past due that the Funeral Industry changes to accommodate the families of deceased loved ones and the funeral homes serving them. This was a pilot program that worked very successfully on a small scale. It prevented a nightmare during the CoVid crisis, taking much pressure off of overloaded funeral home staffing across the state.

I encourage you to approve and extend this action of a larger scale, especially in the Metro Area where volume and staff shortages are extreme.

Respectfully,

Nick Radulovich

President

Kozlak-Radulovich Funeral Chapels

September 18, 2023

To: Minnesota Department of Health

Re: SF 2611

HF 0943

To Whom It May Concern:

Please allow this letter to serve as support for the above mentioned Legislative Bills that were/will be proposed. Every business I know, regardless of type, is facing the challenge of staffing.

In the Funeral Industry, we are not exempt from this difficult situation.

There have been times when removal from the place of death is delayed for hours and even, at times, need to be declined as there are not enough people (licensed) to make the removals from the place of death. Can you imagine having a loved one pass away at home or a nursing facility and funeral homes not being able to respond in a timely matter, often for hours? We have been able to do several removals for families that had already called at least two funeral homes who were unable to do pick up a deceased person who had died at home. These families were frantic by the time they called us. Needless to say, this creates a very uncomfortable time for the families of the deceased and loss of business to many funeral homes. Filling the need with trained, but unlicensed, personnel is a very logical and simple solution. It is inevitable that this will occur in the future. It is long past due that the Funeral Industry changes to accommodate the families of deceased loved ones and the funeral homes serving them. This was a pilot program that worked very successfully on a small scale. It prevented a nightmare during the pandemic, taking much pressure off of overloaded funeral home staffing across the state.

I encourage you to approve and extend this action of a larger scale. This had been an ongoing problem in outstate Minnesota and now has become a major issue in the metro area.

Respectfully,

Teresa Honsa

Owner- Honsa Family Funeral Home

# *Horvath Funeral Service*

Home Office:

P.O. Box 1092 • 404 West Lyon St • Marshall, MN 56258

507-532-4522

[www.horvathfuneralservice.com](http://www.horvathfuneralservice.com)

September 18, 2023

Re: SF 2611

HF 2509

To Whom It May Concern:

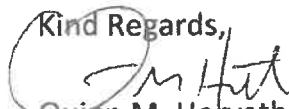
Please be advised that I am in full support of the above listed bills that would allow non-licensed, yet qualified and experienced individuals to perform the initial transportation of deceased individuals from location of death to a licensed funeral establishment. This legislation would provide tremendous benefit to understaffed funeral establishments and, more importantly, the families that call upon us.

Due to our current staff shortage, funeral establishments are struggling to provide timely service. This unnecessary burden causes great inconvenience to families who have suffered a death.

Recently, during our COVID-19 pandemic, these same privileges were granted to non-licensed individuals who were working under the authority of Minnesota Mortician Licensed individuals. During this time, these important tasks were completed with no complaints to the Minnesota Department of Health. Also, our neighboring state of South Dakota allows for the same tasks to be completed by non-licensed individuals with a long record of no consumer complaints.

We are living and working in an unprecedented time with a shortage of licensed morticians. These measures would help us.

Kind Regards,



Quinn M. Horvath

Funeral Director, Funeral Establishment Owner

507.532.4522

## *Remembrance Center Locations*

404 West Lyon St  
Marshall, MN 56258

124 East 1st St  
Minneota, MN 56264

444 Craig Ave  
Tracy, MN 56175

140 2nd St  
Balaton, MN 56115

September 20, 2023

ATTN: Minnesota Department of Health

RE: HF 2509, SF 2611

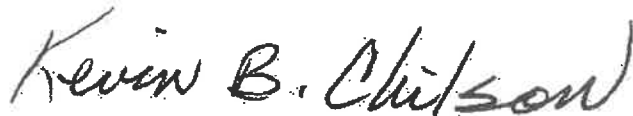
To Whom it May Concern:

Please allow this letter to serve as complete support for the above mentioned Legislative Bills that were/will be proposed. Regardless of type of business, we are all facing the challenge of staffing. The funeral business is not exempt to this challenge.

There have been times where removal of a deceased from their place of death is delayed or even, at times, declined as there are not enough licensed staff to make the removals from the location of death. Can you imagine having a loved one pass away at home or nursing facility and the funeral home you have chosen to care for your loved one not being able to respond to your call for hours? It creates an uncomfortable situation for everyone involved.

Filling this need with trained but unlicensed personnel is a simple and logical solution. It is past due that the funeral industry changes to accommodate families of loved ones that have passed away and the funeral homes that are serving these families. The pilot program that was implemented previously worked very successfully on a small scale. With that in mind, I encourage you to extend this program to a larger scale to allow funeral homes to serve our families in a more timely manner.

Respectfully,



Kevin B. Chilson  
Owner / President  
The Peterson Chapel, Buffalo & St. Michael/Albertville

September 14th, 2023  
To: Minnesota Representatives and Senators

Re: SF 2611  
HF 2509

Dear Legislature Members:

I'm writing to express my support of the above-named bills currently under review in the MN Legislature. Funeral service continues to face workplace shortages, as do many other professions. However, similar to the shortage of healthcare workers, funeral service professionals face an enormous amount of compassion fatigue and workplace burnout. This bill would relieve some of the stress of both the staffing and wellbeing challenges.

As a MN-licensed mortician and former funeral service educator, I am proud of the education that our state requires in order to practice mortuary science. I must hold a license in order to make funeral arrangements with a family, embalm or otherwise care for the dead, and supervise a funeral or burial. Currently, I must also hold a license in order to transfer the dead from their place of death.

However, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, this licensure requirement was temporarily waived by MN-MDH, and unlicensed individuals were allowed to perform initial transfers (removals). Families continued to be cared for, and the dead continued to be respectfully attended to. This was a welcome reprieve in the heart of our collective distress and grief. And it served as a "beta test" of transfer care specialists.

I write with my support of this legislation in particular due to its requirement of training and education for transfer care specialists. It is incredibly important that at this tender and profound moment, the staff facilitating the transfer of the dead are trained on both practical aspects and ethical/compassion aspects. This bill addresses this critical facet of initial transfers.

I hope you will support this legislation in order to supplement the valuable and strenuous work of caring for the living and the dead. Your support will help us continue our sacred work.

Respectfully,

Angela Woosley, M.A.  
Owner, Inspired Journeys  
Board Member, National Home Funeral Alliance

September 15, 2023

To: Minnesota Department of Health

Re: SF 2611

HF 2509

To Whom It May Concern:

Please allow this letter to serve as UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT for the above mentioned Legislative Bills that were/will be proposed. There have been numerous times when the removal from the place of death is delayed for hours and even, at times, need to be declined as there are not enough people (licensed) to make the removals from the place of death. The ability for qualified non-licensed staff members to make the transfer of decedents into the care of a funeral home is long overdue. Having this ability will allow us to properly serve our community. As you recall, during COVID, this ability was granted to us and the end result was very positive for our industry and communities here in Minnesota. Thank you in advance for any consideration as to this request.

Very Respectfully,

James McDaniel  
Foundation Partners Group Minnesota Market Leader  
Cremation Society of Minnesota  
Sandberg Funeral Home  
Willwerscheid Funeral Homes  
Spielman Mortuary  
Twin Cities Cremation  
Atkins Northland Funeral Home



*Mueller-Bies*  
FUNERAL HOMES  
*Family Owned & Operated for Four Generations*

September 20, 2023

Minnesota Department of Health  
85 7<sup>th</sup> PI E  
St. Paul, MN 55101

To Whom it May Concern,

As the owners and operators of Mueller-Bies Funeral Home, we wholeheartedly endorse and support the passage of HF 2509 / SF 2611 to address the critical staffing shortage facing the funeral industry.

As the population grows and the metro area expands, deaths not only increase in number but come from locations across a wide geographical area. Despite our status as a midsize, local funeral provider in the northeast metro, it is not uncommon for us to receive requests for removals in locations from Woodbury to Wyoming, from Brooklyn Park to St. Louis Park. It is difficult to service this need in a timely fashion during normal business hours, much less after. A single funeral director simply cannot respond to all these requests alone at night in a reasonable timeframe. Families are forced to wait long, painful hours for the funeral director to arrive. Bodies are left sitting in nursing homes and in hospital beds. Some providers simply let bodies sit in hospital morgues for days, even weeks.

The mortician staffing shortage is real, and acute. The University of Minnesota Mortuary Science program graduates less than two dozen people per year, and 50% of new licensees are out of the industry within five years. Funeral providers desperately try to fill their own shortages by recruiting licensed directors from their competitors, creating a vicious game of musical chairs that doesn't actually solve the problem, but just moves it from one provider to another. The state's largest cremation provider is known to tell families that there is a ten-day wait simply to get the process started, due to their severe understaffing.

Licensed funeral directors have the responsibility of conducting funeral arrangements, embalming and preparing bodies, and conducting funerals; by law, they are the only people who can perform these functions. When they are additionally required to spend precious hours driving back and forth across the metro or waiting in a loading dock for overworked hospital staff, they don't have the ability to perform those other duties in a timely manner. Add to that the need to respond to after-hours calls and embalm bodies overnight in between full workdays, and it is no wonder so many licensees burn out and leave the industry so quickly. As the population grows and ages, and becomes more widespread geographically, these problems will only be exacerbated.

# Mueller-Bies

FUNERAL HOMES

Family Owned & Operated for Four Generations

A sensible way to help alleviate the acute need for additional staffing in the funeral industry is to allow for supervised, non-licensed personnel to transfer bodies from the place of death to the funeral home. This has the immediate benefit of freeing up scarce licensed funeral directors to perform other duties that, by law, only they can perform. It would allow for greater responsiveness, reducing the time families are forced to wait for someone to arrive. It would help free precious space in hospital morgues, as staff could be dispatched to retrieve bodies while licensed funeral directors are otherwise occupied. It would greatly improve quality of life for the licensed funeral directors, as they could rely on other staff and subcontractors to help respond to death calls after hours instead of being forced to go days without sleep to meet the round-the-clock demands currently placed on them. It would likely lead to less burnout and higher retention of licensed directors by the industry as a whole, as they would have the flexibility to respond to family matters and other responsibilities while sharing their work responsibilities with others.

A common argument by those opposed to nonlicensed body removals is that “unqualified” people would be able to remove and transfer bodies. This is, frankly, nonsense. Any funeral provider who is dispatching someone to make removal of a body is investing that person with their trust and with the reputation and good standing of the business. We are the ones responsible for people handling bodies in our name, and we will be the ones to make sure the people who do so are qualified. We have even less desire to have “unqualified” people handling bodies in our name than the state does, as we are the ones who would suffer for incompetence.

Further, funeral homes have always been allowed to have unlicensed personnel accompany a licensed funeral director on removals. These unlicensed coworkers often have conducted hundreds, if not thousands, of removals alongside licensed directors, and are thus often more “qualified” to do so than the junior funeral director accompanying them.

Further, throughout the duration of the COVID emergency, unlicensed personnel were granted full authority by the State of Minnesota to make removals, and did so without incident. The proposed law has already been field-tested and proven to work. There is no legitimate standing for the state to argue that what worked without issue during the emergency is unacceptable now that it has passed. There is no logical reason that Minnesota cannot follow the path of neighboring Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and allow funeral homes to delegate this responsibility to those they have determined are capable of performing the duty.

Minnesota is the only state to require its licensed funeral directors to hold a four-year degree. By requiring them by law to assume more duties than the number of licensed directors in the state can physically perform in an acceptable timeframe, Minnesota is harming the client families it believes it’s protecting, and forcing highly trained funeral directors out of the industry

# Mueller-Bies

## FUNERAL HOMES

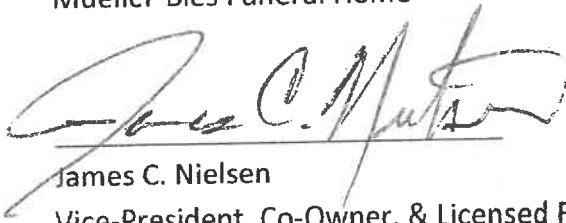
*Family Owned & Operated for Four Generations*

due to burnout. HF 2509 / SF 2611 should be passed into law to allow the funeral providers to spread the removal responsibilities among their staff, properly serve the families placing trust in them, meet the needs of their communities, and retain their workforce.

Sincerely,



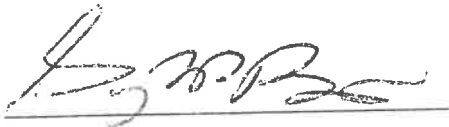
Loretta C. Bies  
President & Co-Owner  
Mueller-Bies Funeral Home



James C. Nielsen  
Vice-President, Co-Owner, & Licensed Funeral Director  
Mueller-Bies Funeral Home



Richard D. Bies  
Vice-President, Co-Owner, & Licensed Funeral Director  
Mueller-Bies Funeral Home



Gary M. Bies  
Vice-President, Co-Owner, & Licensed Funeral Director  
Mueller-Bies Funeral Home