

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that there is a potential to lessen the value, regulation, high standard, accountability & education relating to operating as a funeral director & embalmer in the state of Minnesota. Currently our licensure is for both. I am reaching out personally, to address my heavy concerns & disappointment with this course of action & my disbelief that this is even in question or being considered. Minnesota sets one of the highest standards for education & care for deceased humans in the country.

Our profession is sacred, trusted & backed with well-educated professionals in chemistry, biology, human anatomy, business knowledge, funeral law, state rules & regulations, chemicals for embalming, PPE standards, osha standards, bio hazard handling, cemetery regulations, sharps handling & so much more; not to mention countless hours of training at the University of Minnesota (amongst other institutions) & in clinicals at licensed funeral homes under licensed funeral directors, who are not paid to teach but do so out of our love of funeral service & our hope to create a better future for funeral service.

I (A prep-room manager & funeral service professional of fifteen years) personally run into new cases of trauma, bacterium, drug interactions, potential exposure to deadly microorganisms & pathogens on a daily basis. It is not my licensed & well educated responsibility to train, teach & educate an unlicensed person at all. Unless you are in the program, have the intention to go into funeral service & a clinical license to practice mortuary science you should not be around (and are legally not allowed to witness) what we need to do on a daily basis to allow our families to say their final good byes to their loved one; our deceased guest that is in our trusted care until they are buried or cremated. Not to mention all the potential biohazardous encounters while making home removals, medical examiners removals, water deaths, etc.. These uneducated folks will not be of assistance they will be in the way. What will someone unprepared do if a deceased guest purges in the casket or arrives from another state having purged in their casket? They are simply not qualified to handle such delicate & biohazardous situations.

The care, trust, honesty, knowledgeable service, humility & transparency we provide to your deceased guests & their families is unmatched. Allowing someone without this rigorous training to operate in this manner is unfounded & disturbing at best. We are not trash haulers & handlers, we are preparing someone's loved one for their final farewell with dignity, respect & a license on the line if we do not keep our honesty, our transparency, our composure, our promises, our pricing, our ethics & our facilities running a clean, healthy environment for both the families we serve & their deceased loved ones.

We, as a community of licensed professionals, deserve better than to be undervalued & bullied into allowing our families & deceased guests to be handled by anyone else but a licensed individual who has their livelihood & their name on line every time they make a removal, arrangement, embalming, funeral & burial. There is a level of accountability you cannot achieve by allowing uneducated & unlicensed folks to perform major responsibilities outside of their skill sets & knowledge.

There is a need for more regulation & accountability, not less. We are trusted with the most sacred of care, you would never allow an unlicensed person to operate on another human, to hand out bank loans, to mortgage a home, to cut hair, to operate as a registered nurse, as a medical examiner and too many more to list. There is much more to funeral service than meets the eye & what is being proposed will be the death of humane handling & care of families & deceased guests state wide.

This proposed change relegates us to a shop clerk at your local gas station. Would you trust just anyone with your loved one? Would you be ok knowing the local drunk has seen your loved one in the most

vulnerable situation & is now talking about what they saw out in public with no regard & no consequences? How would that make you feel? How can we trust they won't harm the deceased or steal when they have no recourse, investment or license on the line to hold them accountable? You would like to think there are not bad humans out in the public at large but there are & our level of commitment, education, licensure & decorum separate us out & set the standard.

Are you prepared to have an unlicensed under educated person speaking to a family of a deceased child or infant & then having them make uneducated arrangements where they may not be a licensee around to answer questions or assist; and your new proposition says they don't need supervision. How far down the line would you like me to go? I could mention how uneducated folks would have no idea what decomposition is, where it starts, how it affects the body, how it smells, how & if we can actually treat it so they are viewable. They know none of this, yet you expect me to teach it to them, that's just wrong on so many levels. This proposal was not well thought out nor was any actual licensed funeral director, who is invested in their work, asked their honest opinion before this was proposed. If this is about the all mighty dollar or large corporations short on staff, you need to look deep inside yourself & ask yourself what really matters most...Life, & the loss of life, not anything else.

I beg of you to reconsider this proposal & allow funeral service to continue be the great highly regarded, highly regulated, highly professional career it is. We need more compassionate educated directors in our state, not more pretend directors leading families in the wrong directions & making things up as they go along because at the end of the day; they are not educated in mortuary science. Funeral service as a whole has kept this state running under the pandemic over the last two years with zero recognition on all the sacrifices we have made, all the contamination control & sanitation efforts to allow loved ones to still honor their dead. I guarantee you an unlicensed under educated worker could never.

Thank you for taking the time & consideration for this highly critical matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, loopy initial 'C' followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that tapers to a point on the right.

Chelsea Smolenski M-3900