

March 23, 2026

Co-chair Bierman, Co-chair Backer and esteemed members of the MN House HHS Committee,

Please see the below information in support of HF 84 & HF 85:

## HF 84 – License Reciprocity Bill

### Key Talking Points for Minnesota State Representatives

I would like to begin by thanking co-chair Backer, co-chair Bierman, as well as all the members of the committee, for allowing me to provide supporting information here today. My name is Jay Dietz and I am VP, Funeral Practice & Experience for Vertin, the state's largest provider of funeral services. Today I represent our 42 facilities that operate in 38 communities in Minnesota.

In an effort to quantify the staffing crisis related to licensed morticians in Minnesota, we hired Real Time Talent, a St. Paul firm to provide a detailed workforce analysis: The findings are concerning:

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### The Scope of the Crisis

- Minnesota currently has **only 51 licensed funeral directors for every 100 open positions.**
- **54%** of licensed morticians in Minnesota are age 55 or older.
- **1 in 3** is age 65 or older.
- By **2029, 50% of the current workforce is projected to be gone.**
- Minnesota is estimated to need **552 additional morticians by 2029** to adequately meet demand.
- The **U of M only graduates, on average, 35 students annually, with roughly a 50% retention of those graduates after 5 years..**
- MN Compensation is already attracting the talent we need from other states, **with Minnesota licensed morticians earning 40% more than the national average.**
- **MN's Bachelor's Degree requirement is keeping qualified morticians from helping Minnesotans in their time of greatest need.**

I am asking for your support in making the reciprocity bill a reality.

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# HF 85 – Internship Modernization Bill

I would like to begin by thanking co-chair Backer, co-chair Bierman, as well as all the members of the committee, for allowing me to testify here today. My name is Jay Dietz and I a VP with Vertin, the state's largest provider of funeral services. Today I represent our 42 facilities that operate in 38 communities in Minnesota.

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## We see HF 85 as a retention bill for funeral service.

- The FACTS:
  - The University of Minnesota graduates an average of **35 mortuary students per year**, Only about **half remain in funeral service longer than five years.** (MN and National)
    - **WHY is the retention rate so low?**
    - **The vast majority of Mortuary Science Graduates are 1<sup>st</sup> Generation Funeral Directors**
      - This indicates **that they don't fully understand what this career requires** from an individual, and with our current internship structure, they are unable to gain that exposure.
    - Our neighboring states of **Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota all allow for some or all of the internship to occur concurrently** with mortuary school.
    - Iowa's internship also occurs post-schooling, however, as soon as a student begins a mortuary program, **they immediately have supervised access to ALL activities at a funeral home, – unlike Minnesota.**
    - That gives students a clear picture of what funeral service is truly like, allowing them to make a fully informed decision of becoming a mortician.
    - This lack of experience is a significant cause of the disparity seen in the 2023 data, showing a **33% turnover rate, with only a 10.9% replacement rate (-22% overall loss of the workforce).**
  - The internship bill is supported by the University of Minnesota Mortuary Science Program, as long as interns are required to have completed an anatomy course prior to performing any surgical body care work in a funeral home setting.
  - **I am asking today for your support of HF 85.**

**Additional supporting information provided below:**

## **Disproportionate Impact on Rural Minnesota**

- Rural funeral homes often operate with minimal staffing.
- The loss of even one licensed director can jeopardize service availability.
- Families may be forced to **travel long distances** for funeral services.
- Communities risk losing locally invested professionals who understand their traditions and values.
- Funeral service is an essential piece of the infrastructure in rural communities — critical to public health, dignity, and quality of life.

Minnesotans do not want to leave their communities in their time of grief. They want to be served by professionals who know them and are invested in the places they call home.

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## **Immediate, Common-Sense Legislative Solutions**

### **HF 84 – Licensure Reciprocity**

- Establishes reciprocity with other properly regulated states.
- Allows applicants with **at least 3 years of licensed experience** to qualify for Minnesota licensure.
- Does **not remove Minnesota’s BA degree requirement** for new licensees.
- Addresses barriers preventing experienced professionals from relocating to Minnesota.
- Minnesota compensation is **40% higher than the national average**, generating strong interest in relocation — but current educational requirements block most applicants.

### **HF 85 – Internship Modernization**

- Allows mortuary internships to occur **concurrently with schooling**.
  - Provides earlier real-world exposure.
  - Improves retention and ensures informed career decisions.
  - Strengthens the long-term workforce pipeline.
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## **Additional Important Facts**

- These bills are **truly bipartisan**, with authors from both sides of the aisle.
  - There is **NO COST to the State of Minnesota** to implement these changes.
  - Funeral service touches the life of **every Minnesotan**.
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## Long-Term Stability: Local Recruitment

- Students who grow up in rural communities are most likely to return and remain there as licensed morticians.
  - High school counselors should encourage students who:
    - Demonstrate strong work ethic
    - Naturally serve others
    - Communicate well
    - Show empathy
  - Technical skills can be taught.
  - Scholarship funds are often available.
  - Community-based recruitment is key to sustaining rural funeral service.
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## A Direct Appeal to Minnesota Representatives

The communities you represent will feel this crisis first and most severely.

When a rural funeral home cannot staff services, it is not an inconvenience — it is a hardship placed directly on grieving families. It means longer waits. Greater travel burdens. Less local care. Fewer trusted professionals who understand community traditions.

Funeral service is not optional. It is essential. And without legislative action, access will diminish — especially in rural Minnesota.

These bipartisan, no-cost solutions are ready now.

For the sake of the families and communities you serve, we respectfully urge you to vote **YES on HF 84 and HF 85** before this workforce crisis worsens.

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In closing, I would like to thank Co-Chair Bierman, Co-Chair Backer and all committee members for considering the facts provided. I am available for any questions, and my contact information is included below.

Sincerely,



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