



MASSACHUSETTS FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Statement of the
Massachusetts Funeral Directors Association

House Bill No. 2827
An Act Relative to Deceased Poor and Indigent Persons

June 14, 2005
Committee on Children and Families
State House
Boston, Massachusetts



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**Statement of the
Massachusetts Funeral Directors Association
Re: House Bill No. 2827
An Act Relative to Deceased Poor and Indigent Persons**

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Children and Families Committee:

The Massachusetts Funeral Directors Association represents nearly 500 funeral establishments in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is the largest representative organization of funeral service licensees in the state.

In the period of one year, our members provide services for over 35,000 deaths in the state and we have over 1,500,000 people through our funeral homes in that period of time.

We are writing to seek an OUGHT TO PASS report from the Children and Families Committee on House Bill No.2827 – An Act Relative to Deceased Poor and Indigent Persons.

This legislation will help to correct the current inadequacies that exist in the statute regarding the provision of indigent services for qualified recipients by the Department of Transition Assistance by accomplishing the following:

- Keep the stipend paid by the Department of Transition fixed at the \$1,100 so there will be no additional expenses to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for qualified recipients.
- Remove the list of services and merchandise that must currently be provided by the funeral establishment. By doing this, families will be able to select a service reflecting their family, religious or ethnic custom rather than one dictated by the statute.
- Families will select their desired funeral service based on the services and merchandise offered on the funeral establishment's existing General Price List. As a result, the funeral establishment will not be mandated to provide a specific type of service which may conflict with the wishes of the deceased or survivors; however the funeral establishment and/or others including family members, friends, etc. may contribute resources for the provision of the services on a case by case basis.



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- Eliminate the requirement that the funeral establishment be responsible for purchasing cash advance items from other entities. An example of this is the current requirement that the cemetery space and opening be purchased from the allotted stipend. In many instances, cemetery charges meet or exceed the amount of the current stipend as many cemeteries do not offer indigent burial space or a discount on the grave opening and other charges. The purchase of this space from the \$1,100 stipend often results in a significant loss to the funeral establishment – one that is a continuing and serious hardship to the financial stability of many firms, especially those that serve poor communities in the Commonwealth.

We believe that a change is needed and urge this Committee to act by filing an OUGHT TO PASS report on House Bill No. 2827. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Frederick J. Dolan, President
Massachusetts Funeral Directors Association
Dolan Funeral Homes
Boston & Milton

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