

**Testimony of
Cana Garrison, Government Relations Director
Michigan Funeral Directors Association**

**In Support of Senate Bill 696
House Regulatory Reform Committee
May 12, 2020**

Chairman Webber and members of the House Regulatory Reform Committee, thank you for taking the time to consider Senate Bill (S.B.) 696 introduced by Senator Rick Outman (R-Six Lakes).

Representing nearly 1200 funeral directors serving Michigan's grieving families in 500 funeral homes across the state of Michigan, I extend my thanks to Senator Outman for his decisive leadership as this measure is vital to preserving local funeral homes in small towns and rural communities across Michigan. No matter where a citizen resides, residents' access to funeral service is imperative. However, this is in jeopardy due to population shifts, market trends and regulations currently in state law—particularly in rural Michigan. S.B. 696 makes a small change which will provide tremendous relief for funeral homes in rural areas, while ensuring proper oversight continues in densely populated areas.

Currently, state law requires each licensed funeral home to designate a licensed funeral director to serve as the licensed manager in order to provide oversight and management while ensuring compliance with state laws, rules and regulations of dignified and respectful handling of decedents taken into their care. Every funeral home must have a unique designated manager that, by regulation, is required to be a full-time employee of the funeral home.

As the number of services decline in small towns and rural areas, small branch funeral homes are not able to generate adequate business enabling them to employ a unique licensed funeral director as the licensed manager. Instead of closing, which would preclude residents of small towns and rural areas from having access to necessary funeral and memorial services, SB 696 would allow a funeral home to apply for a waiver of the requirement of a unique designated manager to a panel comprised of members of the State Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science to manage a second facility when the following thresholds are met:

1. The funeral homes are located in the same or contiguous counties;
2. the funeral homes are within 90 miles of each other, and the petitioner resides within 75 miles of each establishment; and
3. the population density (according to the most recent decennial census) of the county or counties where the funeral homes are located is less than the state's population density.

By making this modest change in state policy, a branch funeral establishment in small towns and rural communities, is relieved of needing to generate sufficient revenue to cover the costs of employing a full-time funeral director assigned to that specific location while remaining open to serve residents at their most vulnerable.

Thank you for your time and consideration of ensuring Michigan is a state that provides an environment for small businesses to thrive.

MFDA

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Senate Bill 696

Sponsor: Sen. Rick Outman

The ability for residents to access funeral and memorial services locally is vital to the grieving families of Michigan's rural and small-town communities. Population shifts, market trends and state policy will likely combine to threaten local service accessibility this decade. A small modification in state policy however, will significantly alleviate this problem.

State law requires that every funeral home in Michigan must have a designated licensed funeral director as its manager who must be a full-time employee of the funeral home. In addition, an individual licensed funeral director may only be designated the manager of one funeral establishment. This restriction generally ensures that the licensed manager is not spread too thin to maintain the proper oversight of the funeral home. S.B. 696 would slightly modify this restriction by allowing a licensed funeral director to petition a panel comprised of members of the State Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science to manage a second facility when the following safeguards are met:

- The funeral homes are located in the same or contiguous counties;
- The funeral homes are within 75 miles of each other and the petitioner resides within 90 (S-1) miles of both establishments; and
- The population density (according to the most recent decennial census) of the county or counties where the funeral homes are located is less than the state's population density.

By making this modest change in state policy, a branch funeral establishment in a small town or rural community would be relieved of the burden of generating sufficient revenue to cover the costs of a full-time funeral director assigned to that specific location. Relieving this pressure will allow many of the local facilities to continue serving these communities.

For further questions or comments, please contact:

Becky Bechler or Frank Foster
PAA
Assoc.
(517) 371-3800

Cana Garrison
Michigan Funeral Directors
(517) 349-9565

