

Thank you Chair Rogers and members of the House Health Policy Committee, and thank you Chair Rogers and Representative Mueller for your leadership on these important bills.

On behalf of 1100 funeral directors and over 400 funeral homes, MFDA is happy to speak in strong support of House Bills 5043 & 5044. My name is Jared Rozycki, and I serve as the Director of Government Relations for the Michigan Funeral Directors Association.

With me today is Sarah Jensen-Vatter, a licensed funeral director at Palmer Bush & Jensen Funeral Home here in Lansing and an executive board member at MFDA.

House Bills 5043 & 5044 seek to solve one of the largest frustrations facing funeral directors, the mortuary science profession, and Michigan's grieving families – that being obtaining timely medical certification on death certificates.

These measures were developed in consultation with the Department of Human Services' Vital Records and Health Statistics Division and stem from a workgroup between our association, the Michigan State Medical Society, the Michigan Association of Medical Examiners and the Michigan Association of County Clerks.

By way of background, current law requires medical certification to be completed within 48 hours by a physician or medical examiner. It is not until medical certification is obtained that a burial or cremation permit can be issued, meaning funeral arrangements cannot proceed until a death certificate is medically certified.

As you can imagine, this only exacerbates the grief of families experiencing the loss of a loved one.

House Bills 5043 and 5044 would do the following:

-Require that all medical certification be completed through DHHS' Electronic Death Registration System – EDRS – within 48 hours and upon training. This web-based system is utilized universally by funeral directors but sporadically used by physicians for medical certification, causing further delays.

-The bills would also clarify and provide a single standard for when circumstances of a death warrant a county medical examiner investigation and medical certification. This eliminates confusion regarding who is responsible for medical certification.

According to the Vital Records Division at DHHS, in 2021, 10.4% of all death certificates took 10 days or longer to medically certify. This is five times longer than what is statutorily required. Granted this was during the pandemic, but the numbers for last year show delays in medical certification still being an issue.

In 2023, 25% of all death certificates took 4 days or longer to medically certify, taking twice as long than what is statutorily required.

At the end of the day, these measures will substantially improve Michigan's death registration system and prevent unnecessary delays in funeral arrangements for grieving Michigan families.

With that said, I would like to turn it over to Sarah where she can touch on her experiences with medical certification delays as a funeral director.