

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence
For HB 3357

Compiled on: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 8:38 PM

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Hearing Date: April 8, 2025 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Kathryn Pinneri, MD
Montgomery County Medical Examiner's Office
Conroe, TX

I am writing in support of this bill. Medical examiner review of cremation authorizations is an important and necessary quality assurance process for death certification. Currently, many medical examiner counties perform this function; however, it is not consistent state-wide. It is important to standardize the practice with this legislation to eliminate the ambiguity that currently exists. As a newly created medical examiner's office, the very first cremation authorization that was submitted through our office was a death due to a traumatic event that never got reported as required by law. Catching these cases plays a vital role in public health, helping to ensure that non-natural deaths are properly certified by medical examiners. In my experience, physician attended deaths and hospice deaths are the most likely ones to be incorrectly certified. The traumatic incident that initiated the chain of events culminating in the person's death is often overlooked by the certifying/attending physician. For instance, an elderly individual falls and breaks their hip, develops pneumonia and is placed on hospice care where they die 2 weeks later. Often the cause of death is listed as pneumonia and the manner of death is listed as natural, completely disregarding the hip fracture that led to the person's debilitation and subsequent development of pneumonia. The correct cause of death should be acute pneumonia due to prolonged debilitation/immobility due to blunt trauma with hip fracture. The correct manner of death is accident. Correct certification of these deaths is important for vital statistics and public health since mortality and injury information is taken from death certificates. Many current safety measures, such as seatbelts, bicycle helmets and backyard pool fences were developed based on death certificate data and injury information. Delayed deaths from traumatic events are equally important to document and will be missed if the deaths aren't reviewed by a medical examiner. Improvements in safety devices may come from individuals who sustained injuries that weren't immediately life threatening, but that resulted in death weeks later. This bill provides an opportunity for the Texas legislature to improve vital statistics mined from our state as well as ensure that public health needs are being met. Death certificates provide an enormous amount of information to local, state and national health departments. The information they contain needs to be correct. Mandating authorization for cremation from a medical examiner should not be a cumbersome process for the funeral homes or families of the decedents. Often the cremation authorization can be completed the same day as the request if the information is accurate. As stated previously, many medical examiner's offices are already functioning in this manner. We seek to make the process uniform across the state. Thank you for your time.

James Lucas

Texas Funeral Directors Associatin

North Richland Hills, TX

I am personally and professionally opposed to HB 3357. This bill will allow unchecked and unnecessary fees to Texas consumers that choose cremation. This bill has no provisions, oversight or plan for standard pricing of cremation authorization permits of which allow Medical Examiners to go unchecked and charge for permits that are unnecessary. In addition this HB is anti small business and will cause an undue financial hardship to businesses that provide funeral and cremation services to Texas families of which will lead to price increases for services rendered. There are already provisions in statute that speak appropriately to cremation authorization procedures. In short this is a money grab by Medical Examiners and will allow for unchecked amounts to be charged for families choosing cremation. In 2024 approximately 231,798 death certificates were filed in Texas and of those approximately 128,638 of those families chose cremation. Approximately 55% of Texas families selected cremation in 2024. If approved HB 3357 will financially negatively impact 128,638 Texas families in all counties. I oppose HB 3357. James Lucas of Lucas Funeral Home / Established in 1860.