



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations

FROM: Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: January 29, 2018

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of SB 724, the Funeral Director Apprentice Modernization Act

Thank you Chairman Kapenga and members of the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations for holding a hearing on SB 724 today. As the author of this legislation, along with Senator Roth, I am pleased to testify before you and to take any questions that committee members may have. I appreciate your time and consideration of this important legislation.

SB 724 is the Funeral Director Apprentice Modernization Act (FDMA). Funeral directors, especially those in rural areas, have been strongly impacted by a declining supply of funeral director apprentices. The last time regulations on funeral directors were truly updated, more than fifty years ago, Wisconsin's mortuary school graduated over fifty licensed funeral directors. This past year, Wisconsin's mortuary school has seventeen students currently enrolled in its program. In short, the demand for apprentices by funeral directors is much greater than the supply.

The Funeral Director Apprentice Modernization Act (FDMA) is legislation that will help address the staffing issues faced by funeral directors by updating outdated apprenticeship requirements. Currently, in order to become a funeral director apprentice, a person must complete one academic year at a recognized college or university, meaning that 28 college credit hours are currently required to become an apprentice. These college credits often times do not relate to the work that has to be done as an apprentice in the funeral home. For example, these credits may be in study areas of history, philosophy, or geography.

Under this legislation, the existing college credit requirement would be replaced by a 16-hour certification course approved by the Funeral Director Examining Board. By having coursework more tailored to the work done by an apprentice, the student will have a better idea of what the profession entails and will be better prepared for their future duties. Also, by updating the college credit requirement, apprenticeship positions will be opened up to those unable or unwilling to invest their time or finances by undertaking a year of schooling and will help funeral directors, especially those in rural areas, to fill these positions.

In addition, current law requires a 1:1 ratio of funeral directors to apprentices. However, lone directors who need to address personal issues, such as taking a sick day or attending a family commitment, are often forced to make difficult decisions about how to meet their work obligations. This legislation maintains the 1:1 ratio; however, it makes an exception in the case of lone funeral directors. The bill



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provides assistance to those who may be experiencing workload difficulties by allowing them to take on a second apprentice.

This legislation also provides additional practical updates to the apprenticeship requirements. Currently, apprenticeship is limited to four years, with a possible one year extension granted by the Funeral Director Examining Board. Under this bill, after four years or five (if an extension is given), a funeral director apprentice can continue upon completion of the previously mentioned certification course. Furthermore, current law does not specify how much supervision be given to apprentices by funeral directors. This bill requires that apprentices be within the funeral director's line of sight, increasing oversight and observation. The bill will not: alter the duties funeral director apprentices are currently allowed to perform, change the duration of a funeral director's active license, or alter anything related to the funeral director license.

Apprenticeship positions are real, paid employment. In many funeral homes, apprentices are paid \$15 per hour and often include benefits. As mentioned, there is currently a great amount of need for personnel in this line of work, especially in rural areas. Apprenticeship can be a great opportunity for a second career, especially for veterans, law enforcement, fire professionals, and folks wishing to help out in their local communities.

As you'll hear today from those here to testify in support of this legislation, local funeral homes provide an invaluable and necessary service to their communities. Funeral directors, and especially our rural directors, often have the same difficulties that many of our rural employers face, including the challenge of finding skilled workers. Without a modification to the existing state law, funeral directors will continue to face assistance shortages. These family businesses may eventually be forced to close or make difficult decisions due to the inability to find a successor coupled with the strenuous and difficult nature of the work.

I ask that you join Senator Roth and myself, along with the Funeral Service and Cremation Alliance of Wisconsin, in support of the effort to remove barriers to entry for funeral service professionals and allow more individuals to have the opportunity to serve as funeral service apprentices.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.



ROGER ROTH

PRESIDENT

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

January 30, 2018

Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations

2017 Senate Bill 724

Relating to: funeral director apprenticeships

I would like to thank Chairman Kapenga and the Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations for holding a public hearing on this legislation today. I would also like to thank Representative VanderMeer for working with me on this important industry licensing update.

Senate Bill 724, also known as the Funeral Director Apprentice Modernization Act, will address an increasing shortage of funeral directors in Wisconsin. This is particularly problematic in rural areas, who face difficulties both attracting and retaining funeral directors and funeral director apprentices. With the number of funeral directors falling behind industry demand, it is time for Wisconsin to update its outdated regulations and allow more qualified candidates to join the workforce.

Under current law, to become a funeral director apprentice, a candidate must complete 28 credit hours at a state-recognized college or university. These credits do not need to be related to the funeral director field and are simply used to qualify for the apprentice program. SB 724 eliminates the existing college credit requirement and instead replaces it with a 16-hour course approved by the Funeral Director Examining Board. This will eliminate the financial and scheduling barriers many face attending a post-secondary institution. This will also guarantee that individuals focus their studies on topics relevant to the funeral director field and increase their working knowledge of the industry.

Current law also requires a 1:1 ratio of funeral director to apprentice. Under SB 724, the 1:1 ratio is maintained except in the case of lone funeral directors. These individuals often face the difficult choice of balancing personal commitments and work obligations due to staffing shortages. In these instances, lone directors are able to take on a second apprentice and continue meeting the work demand in their communities.

Ultimately, this bill will not substantively alter the duties of funeral directors apprentices, change licensing requirements for funeral directors, or decrease professional oversight. Rather this legislation codifies supervision requirements in the apprentice program by requiring that apprentices remain within the line-of-sight of a funeral director at all times, something non-existent under current law.

It is my hope that SB 724 will increase the number of professionals in this critical field, and provide families with peace of mind in their most difficult days.

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of WISCONSIN
Funeral Service & Cremation Alliance of Wisconsin

January 30, 2018

Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations
Senator Kapenga, Chair
Wisconsin State Capitol

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations,

My name is Erin Longmire and I am the Executive Director of the Funeral Service & Cremation Alliance of Wisconsin (FSCA), which is a statewide trade association representing funeral directors and homes throughout Wisconsin. The FSCA is asking for your support of SB 724, the Funeral Director Apprentice Modernization Act (FDAMA).

Wisconsin is facing a funeral service staffing crisis. Over fifty years ago, Wisconsin's mortuary school graduated over fifty licensed funeral directors. This year, Wisconsin's mortuary school has seventeen currently enrolled in the program. The need to recruit people into the profession has become paramount in assuring that well-qualified individuals are meeting the needs of Wisconsin's citizenry.

The FDAMA would remove barriers to entry for those interested in funeral service, while allowing more individuals an opportunity to try the profession to determine if it is right for them.

The FDAMA

This bill would do the following to help address the current staffing shortage:

- Remove the arbitrary one year of academic instruction prior to licensure, and instead replace this requirement with a 16 hour pre-certification class.
- Allow for one licensed funeral director to have up to two licensed apprentices at any given time, which will help smaller, rural funeral homes with their immediate staffing issues.
- Increase the level of supervision in which a licensed funeral director must engage when monitoring a licensed apprentice, which will ensure consumers continue to receive a high level of regulatory protections.

Myths

The bill would not do the following:

- Alter the duties funeral director apprentices currently are allowed.
- Change the length of time in which a funeral director apprentice can be licensed.
- Alter anything relating to the funeral director license.

OVER

The FDAMA is an important step forward in addressing the staffing crisis in funeral service. While it may not solve all of our issues, it is a measured starting point in removing arbitrary barriers to entry and eliminating unnecessary regulations as it pertains to our apprentice program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Longmire', written in a cursive style.

Erin Longmire
Executive Director, FSCA

January 30, 2018

Senate Committee
Wisconsin State Capitol

Dear Senate Committee,

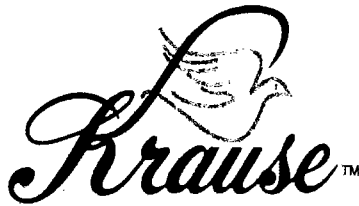
My name is David Allan Loncaric. I live in Glendale, WI. I started work at Krause Funeral Homes & Cremation Services, Inc. in July 2017 as a funeral assistant.

I come from a back ground of divorced parents and therefore since graduating high school, I had limited financial resources to attend college. I went straight into the work force after completing a certification from a travel academy school. From there, I started my first career in the airline industry. I have sixteen years of airline customer service and management experience. Since leaving the airline industry, I started pursuing a career in the meeting/event planning industry which has now lead me to work for Krause Funeral Homes & Cremation Services, Inc.

I've had the unfortunate experience of dealing with many different types of death – my grandparents dying of old age, my cousin in a tragic car accident, a friend committing suicide during my high school years, my mother dying at the age of 56 due to cancer, and most recently, my father dying in 2011. These instances all led to my interest in possibly pursuing a career in funeral service, however, given the current requirements to become an apprentice it is extremely challenging to know if being a funeral director is a career choice for me. If I could be permitted to become an apprentice without the college credits, it would allow me the opportunity to see if going to college to become a funeral director is the right career path for me. I firmly believe that at my age, adults would not go to college for a year, just to become an apprentice, only to find out it is the wrong career field.

My six months of experience with Krause Funeral Home as a funeral assistant has demonstrated to me that more compassionate people are needed in this industry and should be allowed to explore this career field without having to have these arbitrary college requirements.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



FUNERAL HOMES & CREMATION SERVICES, INC.

January 30, 2018

Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing and State-Federal Relations
Senator Kapenga, Chair
Wisconsin State Capitol

Dear Esteemed Senators:

I am Mark Krause, president and owner of Krause Funeral Homes and Cremation Service in the Greater Milwaukee Area. I am providing testimony in favor of SB 724, which is looking for some minor changes to our apprentice laws that will modernize some very arbitrary restrictions that stop individuals from entering the funeral service profession while, at the same time, increase professional supervision on new apprentices from their mentor licensed funeral director.

Krause Funeral Homes was founded in 1933 and has grown to become one of Wisconsin's largest funeral providers. My funeral home includes 5 facilities while employing about 65 people, of which, 20 are licensed funeral directors and 5 are licensed apprentice funeral directors. Personally, I would hire 5 more funeral directors and 5 more apprentice funeral directors right now if they were available, but they are not.

I have a unique perspective on this issue because of my background. I have been president of 2 large international funeral organizations, a nationally recognized industry lecturer educator, member of the American Board of Funeral Service Education, member of the State's only Mortuary School's Advisory Board and current president of the Funeral Service and Cremation Alliance of Wisconsin. Nationwide, as well as in the state of Wisconsin, Funeral Service is experiencing a crisis of individuals not entering our profession.

Our profession is experiencing an assortment of issues that are creating challenges for funeral home staffing. The American workforce is experiencing more people retiring from or leaving the workforce than entering it. The beginning of the Baby-Boomer effect on the death rate, the complexity of contemporary funerals, marketing and preneed funding of funerals have all contributed to greater demands on the time, quantity and quality of today's funeral professional. The job market is only going to become more difficult for funeral homes looking for new staff. Mortuary schools do not have the time or resources to develop directors that can, "hit the ground running" in the short time they have with students. Many smaller communities will lose their local funeral home because of the shrinking availability of funeral directors.

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This bill removes arbitrary barriers to entry by removing the current requirement of needing 28 college credits, in any subject, before you can acquire an apprentice license. This bill will now replace those 28 credits in history, political science, or other irrelevant classes with a 16-hour certification class on industry pertinent topics, much like a Certified Nursing Assistant takes before they can start their careers. The Department of Safety and Professional Service's Funeral Director's Examining Board would approve this 16-hour certification class. Talks about creating this certification class are already underway with Wisconsin's only Mortuary Science School at MATC in Milwaukee.

By changing this 28-credit requirement, our profession will now be open to second career individuals with no college experience. These individuals' might be veterans, police, firefighters, EMTs, or homemakers. These people will now have a chance to explore our profession and see if funeral service is a vocation of interest. This would also allow funeral homes to be a bigger part of recruiting young people coming right out of high school.

Currently, my funeral home hires apprentices at \$15 per hour with health, retirement and other benefits, not a bad starting wage for a job right out of high school. Many individuals in high school do not think of funeral service as a career choice, unless they have a family member who already serves in the funeral profession. Our funeral home would love to participate in career development days at local high schools to encourage students to think of funeral service as a potential career path. You may hear from others in my profession speaking out against this bill. They may talk about a delusion or weakening of the funeral director license. This is untrue. This bill will not: alter the duties funeral director apprentices are currently allowed to perform; change the duration of a funeral director's active license; or alter anything related to the funeral director license.

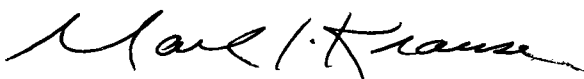
None of the requirements to earn a funeral director's license are changed. You will still need 2 years of college level prerequisites and graduation from an accredited mortuary science school. You will still need 2000 hours of an apprenticeship under the supervision of a licensed funeral director, while doing the same reporting to the state of casework.

You may also hear how the changing of this law will bring in an unsavory element to our profession. This logic makes no sense. Currently, funeral directors and funeral homes decide whom they will hire and this will not change under this bill. A reputable funeral home will not hire someone that will damage or jeopardize their reputation that maybe has been built over decades.

In closing, funeral directing is not an easy vocation and time and experience are needed to be effective for the families and the funeral homes. This law will invest in the future and put funeral service in the best position to provide a staff that will excel at meeting the needs of the funeral consumer.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mark J. Krause
President, Krause Funeral Home

Thank you in advance for your time regarding the funeral director apprenticeship licensure topic

Just imagine this, I get up put my uniform on and go to work. We receive a call for our services. I show up at your place and perform external chest compressions on you. I can place large shocking pads on your chest and send 360 Jules of electrical activity thru you. I can suction your mouth out of vomit, mucus or blood. Place a breathing tube down your throat and help you breathe. We can take a special drill and place IO's in your tibia and humorous for intravenous fluid infusions. I can dress your bleeding lacerations from a knife or gunshot wound. I will help keep your neck and back supported as we try to extricate you from your vehicle that's wrapped around a tree. Will administer life saving medications ranging from aspirin to Epi plus more that if given incorrectly can cause great bodily or even kill you. Will place you on a cot and take you to an ambulance where we transport you to a local ER praying that we don't get into an accident injuring others or ourselves.

Fast forward to the next day. I get up put my other uniform on this suit and I show up at the funeral home where I can help with limited thing. This work I enjoy very much and the directors that I work with have often said that I should get my license because you really understand and are very good at this line of work. I have to say to them that I appreciate their comments, but the pre-rec's and requirements are just to unattainable for myself. I think it's ironic that I can show up at your home or a scene put you on a cot and take you to an ER, but I don't have the requirements to get an apprentice license to put you on a cot and take you to a funeral home. I feel funeral service, much like EMS is a specialty trades type of job. It seems a little backwards that it takes more requirements to help the deceased then it does to obtain a license to help save someone. By changing the requirements to obtain this licensure you maybe opening the door for others to explore this career field to see if it's for them. I would bet that you would also be helping other funeral homes especially smaller firms that maybe struggling to obtain staff.

Thank you.