



Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association

Testimony Before the Committee Meeting for the Amendment of Article 207 of the
NYC Health Code

On behalf of the Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association

July 28, 2009

Presented by President of MFDA – Martin D. Kasdan

Good Morning,

My name is Martin Kasdan; I am a licensed funeral director in the State of New York, licensed manager of a funeral home in Queens and the President of the MFDA, the largest and most active funeral director association in the NYC Metropolitan Area.

I have been active over the past 12 years in the suggestion for, planning for and implementation of the NYC Electronic Death Registration System. We applaud the NYC DOH and Mental Hygiene on the progress made in the design and bringing into reality the use of the EDRS.

I am pleased to be here today to represent the funeral directors of Metro NY and to speak on behalf of the families we are honored to serve.

Many of the changes proposed today and before you in a public hearing make a great deal of sense and will go a long way to make the decades old cumbersome system of filing a death certificate much more user friendly and streamlined. We applaud Dr. Steven Schwartz and his colleagues for the changes.

Some of the proposed changes need clarification and input from not only the funeral director community but from other City agencies as well.

EDRS

We are concerned with the stipulations concerning who must file death certificates electronically.

The DOH is allowing hospitals, nursing homes, health related facilities, hospices etc. who file less than 25 death certificates to be exempt from the use of EDRS.

They also allow physicians who are not registered or trained within the system and who in reality may handle multiple deaths during a year from their private offices to by-pass the use of the system.

Our stance is that this system needs to be made mandatory for all participants as soon as possible. It will make the people who are involved with this system responsible to become part of EDRS.

It will also take the onus off the funeral directing community in having to chase physicians for issuance of death certificates, literally making themselves available at the beck and call of the physician.

We believe when the system is made mandatory it will benefit everyone involved.

Fees

Corrections

The proposal for making a fee for the correction of death certificates is the first issue we would like to discuss.

The Correction Division has been a bone of contention known to the Department and the City Council for many years ~~for~~

The slowness of the system – Holding up corrections for many months makes it almost impossible for families to settle the estate matters and get on with their lives.

The inability to contact anyone in the Corrections Division for information on the correction while in progress

we have had

The multiple meetings over the years with Dr. Schwartz and his colleagues to voice our concerns and the promises and deadlines not met

The institution of a \$40 fee for correction of death certificates will make the families and the funeral directors who assist them demand a quid pro quo for the fee. There seems to be no information on how this collection fee will benefit the families waiting a correction.

Will the funds go to the DOH to assist them in streamlining and making their system responsive to the needs of the participants? Or is the money collected going to the general funds of the City and not for the betterment of the system?

Permit Issuance Fees

By following the rationale for the collection of a \$40 fee for each permit issued to a funeral firm for the issuance of a burial, cremation or transportation of the decedent to the place of final disposition seems to be a reasonable idea on the surface.

We once again question where is the money going and will the money return to the NYC DOH for the betterment of their systems. In particular the technical support for the EDRS which is not technically supported during the early overnight hours, during the weekend and on holidays. Our business and therefore your business in serving the needs of the surviving families should be paramount. No funding for technical support from the \$40 fee would ~~mitigate~~ *penal* our support of such a measure.