

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1691

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Business & Financial Services

**Title:** An act relating to embalmers.

**Brief Description:** Concerning embalmers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kirby, Anderson, Springer, Eddy, Ryu, Morris and Stanford.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Business & Financial Services: 2/1/11, 2/4/11 [DPS].

### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows educational institutions offering embalming training programs to receive human remains that a county is required to provide for the disposition of at public expense.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Kelley, Vice Chair; Bailey, Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Condotta, Hudgins, Hurst, Parker, Pedersen, Rivers, Ryu and Stanford.

**Staff:** Alison Hellberg (786-7152).

### Background:

Counties are responsible for providing for the disposition of the remains of any indigent person whose body is unclaimed by relatives or a church organization. Remains of persons that will be buried at the public expense are required to be surrendered to a physician or surgeon. These bodies must be used for the advancement of anatomical science. Preference is given to medical schools in this state for their use in the instruction of medical students.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Embalmers are regulated by the Department of Licensing. In order to be licensed, an applicant must complete the required education in mortuary science, complete an embalmer internship, and successfully pass an examination.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

A public agency required to provide for the disposition of human remains at public expense may surrender the remains to an accredited educational institution offering funeral services and embalming programs. The bodies must be used in training embalming students under the supervision of a licensed embalmer.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Several changes are made to make language and references consistent with other statutes that address the disposition of human remains. The words "dead bodies" and "bodies" are replaced with "human remains" and "remains." The term "buried" is replaced with "disposition of human remains in any legal manner." References are made to other statutes that contain requirements regarding the disposition of human remains and it is clarified that public agencies releasing human remains to embalming programs are also subject to those requirements.

Other language changes are made. The term "church" organization is replaced with "religious" organization. The general term "public agency" replaces "sheriff, coroner, keeper or superintendent of a county poorhouse, public hospital, county jail, or state institution." The language in the statute is made gender neutral.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Lake Washington Technical College recently received accreditation and is the only comprehensive embalming program in the state. To become an embalmer, a student must perform at least 10 embalmings. Most other mortuary programs have access to human remains and are able to provide this educational opportunity to students. Because of Washington's law, Washington programs are unable to provide this. It is easier and a better learning opportunity to do at school. Lake Washington Technical College has all of the proper refrigerators and facilities.

This would also benefit the community by helping to provide for the proper disposition of indigent remains. The county's indigent program is going broke and the need is rising. In most situations, indigent persons are ultimately cremated because of cost issues. This program would save tax dollars because student fees would pay for cremation charges.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Erin Wilcox, Lake Washington Technical College.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.