

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1700

As Reported by House Committee On:
Business & Financial Services

Title: An act relating to cremation by biochemical hydrolysis.

Brief Description: Concerning cremation by biochemical hydrolysis.

Sponsors: Representatives McBride, Jinkins, Peterson and Fitzgibbon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Business & Financial Services: 2/7/17, 2/8/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds alkaline hydrolysis as an approved final disposition of a deceased person's body.
- Amends various statutes to include alkaline hydrolysis, hydrolyzed human remains, and hydrolysis facilities in the regulation of handling, storing, and scattering human remains.
- Adds licensing and inspection regulations for hydrolysis facilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Reeves, Vice Chair; Vick, Ranking Minority Member; J. Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Bergquist, Blake, Jenkin, McCabe, Santos and Stanford.

Staff: Robbi Kesler (786-7153).

Background:

The Department of Licensing (Department) regulates certain professions and businesses, including funeral directors, embalmers, funeral establishments, cemeteries, and crematories.

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.

There are laws related to how human remains may be handled, stored, and disposed of. In instances where the deceased human body is cremated there are regulations related to scattering the cremated human remains. Facilities, including crematories, that perform services related to the final disposition of human remains are licensed by the Department and may be inspected.

Summary of Bill:

Alkaline hydrolysis is defined as the reduction of human remains to bone fragments and essential elements using heat, pressure, water, and alkaline substances. Alkaline hydrolysis is included as an allowed final disposition of a deceased person's body.

Alkaline hydrolysis facilities must be licensed and may be inspected by the Department.

Various statutes governing the final disposition of human remains, handling and scattering of the reduced remains, and operation of a facility that offers these services are amended to include alkaline hydrolysis, hydrolyzed human remains, and hydrolysis facilities. Alkaline hydrolysis will be regulated in a similar manner to cremation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a somber subject, but needs to be addressed. Alkaline hydrolysis is an environmentally sound option for final disposition. This process uses water that can be recycled and has a lower carbon footprint. It is important to give our citizens another choice of final disposition. Alkaline hydrolysis is similar to cremation, but is a more environmentally friendly option because of the reduced emissions and lower energy use. Everyone should have a choice, and this is a good option for those that wish to use it. Hydrolysis is legal in several other states, including Oregon. Because Oregon allows alkaline hydrolysis, Washington businesses have been losing customers. This is a dignified, peaceful process. Alkaline hydrolysis is the next natural progression for final disposition.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative McBride, prime sponsor; TK Bentler, Washington State Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association; Kathy Long, People's Memorial Association; Nick Brown, All County Cremations; and John Spencer, Pulse Consultant.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.