

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5001

As Passed House - Amended:
April 9, 2019

Title: An act relating to human remains.

Brief Description: Concerning human remains.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Pedersen, King, Rivers, Keiser, Palumbo, Saldaña, Liias, Carlyle, Conway, Kuderer and Van De Wege).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Consumer Protection & Business: 2/19/19, 2/20/19 [DPA];
Appropriations: 3/18/19, 4/1/19 [DPA(CPB)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/9/19, 80-16.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Adds alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction as approved means of final disposition of a deceased person's body.
- Updates various statutes to include alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction in the regulation of handling, storing, and scattering human remains.
- Adds licensing regulations for alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction facilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & BUSINESS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kirby, Chair; Reeves, Vice Chair; Vick, Ranking Minority Member; Hoff, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Blake, Dufault, Ryu, Santos, Stanford, Volz, Walen and Ybarra.

Staff: Robbi Kesler (786-7153).

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Consumer Protection & Business. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Cody, Dolan, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hoff, Hudgins, Jinkins, Macri, Mosbrucker, Pettigrew, Pollet, Ryu, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Steele, Sullivan, Tarleton, Tharinger, Volz and Ybarra.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Chandler and Kraft.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Sutherland.

Staff: Jessica Van Horne (786-7288).

Background:

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

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 Amended 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.

"Natural organic reduction" is defined as contained, accelerated conversion of human remains to soil.

"Natural organic reduction facility" means a crematory, an alkaline hydrolysis facility, or a natural organic reduction facility. Reduction facilities must obtain a license or endorsement from the Department.

Various statutes governing the final disposition of human remains, handling and scattering of the cremated remains, and operation of a facility that offers these services are amended to "reduce/reduced/reduction" as more general terms which include cremation, alkaline hydrolysis, or natural organic reduction. Generally, the amendments include reduction and the related terms in a similar manner to the laws related to cremation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect on May 1, 2020.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Consumer Protection & Business):

(In support) This bill will provide more options for, and presents the opportunity to provide, innovative ways to reduce human remains.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) This bill permits two additional means for disposing of bodies after death. These new methods are proven to be safe and effective, are more environmentally friendly than current methods, and will provide more accessible and less expensive options for families. Having the opportunity to choose a means of disposition other than burial or cremation is appealing. The original bill was amended to have a delayed effective date, which will reduce costs for the Department of Licensing.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Consumer Protection & Business): Representative Pedersen, prime sponsor; and Courtney Blatz, Recompose.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Senator Pedersen, prime sponsor; Courtney Blatz, Recompose; and Wes McMahan.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Consumer Protection & Business): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.