



Wes Retherford

State Representative

**Sponsor Testimony of Representative Wes Retherford
Regarding Alkaline Hydrolysis (House Bill 36)
Before the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on behalf of House Bill 36, the Alkaline Hydrolysis Bill. I look forward to taking you down the journey which is my real job outside the legislature. Death is always difficult to discuss and the process that we have for handling remains is even harder.

Our bill would legalize the use of alkaline hydrolysis in Ohio. This process would give funeral homes and families an alternative method to cremation. Alkaline hydrolysis, also known as the “flameless cremation”, is a more efficient by using less energy, and has fewer emissions than cremation. As of now, this process is currently legal in seven states, including Florida, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Colorado, Kansas, and Illinois.

In the Alkaline Hydrolysis process, the body is placed into a silk, leather, or wool bag, then placed into a metal cage frame. This is then loaded into a machine called a Resomator. This machine is filled with a mixture of water and lye, and then heated to 350 degrees while at a high pressure, which prevents boiling from occurring. Through this process, the body is broken down into its basic chemical components. This is essentially what would happen to a body when buried, but in a matter of hours instead of years.

The end result is a quantity of liquid and bone, which is taken and crushed into a fine dust, and is given to the next of kin of the deceased. This result is very similar to what happens during a traditional “fire” cremation. The left over “cremains” is actually bone that is pulverized, not actual ashes, as most people would think. The liquid is disposed of through the sanitary sewer system or other means including use in garden or green space. The process takes a time of about two to three hours, equivalent to that of cremation. In the end, though, it is truly about family care in the most difficult hours of their lives, the loss of a loved one. This bill would still include the same safeguards as traditional cremation, including Next of Kin approval, Next of Kin Identification and the filing of a death certificate before any steps can be taken. More importantly, it is about offering funeral homes and family one more Option in the disposition of Human Remains. This bill would be completely voluntary, and the service would not be required to be made available, but would allow the handful of funeral homes who have invested in this technology to use the process. I would also like to point out to the committee that my funeral home, nor the company who owns it utilizes this process. They also do not use this

process in any of the states where it has been legalized. I point that out to clarify that there is no conflict of interest in allowing this process, neither I nor my employer plan to use this process, therefore we will not benefit from it.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 36. I will be happy to address any questions you may have at this time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wes Retherford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wes Retherford
State Representative
Ohio House District 51

