

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5001

As Reported by House Committee On:
Consumer Protection & Business

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].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)

- 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).

Background:

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.

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.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The striking amendment replaces "postreduction human remains" with "human remains" in several sections and adds specific types of postreduction processes to various sections.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

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

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pedersen, prime sponsor; and Courtney Blatz, Recompose.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.