



## NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE

Stephen Davis  
Executive Director

Mark Blake  
President

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Roy A. Cooper, III  
Governor of North Carolina  
The Capitol  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

Dear Governor Cooper:

I am writing on behalf of North Carolina's professional funeral practitioners with an urgent and compelling request regarding prospective measures that might be implemented to contain and mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

As state governments throughout the United States consider all necessary measures and safeguards to protect the safety and well-being of the public during this public health crisis, I am aware that one of those measures could be a "shelter-in-place" option. The NC Board of Funeral Service strongly urges that you deem all licensed funeral establishments and deathcare professions as "essential services." Funeral-related professionals are clearly and certainly essential as key components of the state's business- and health-related infrastructure in responding to the novel Coronavirus pandemic confronting all North Carolina citizens.

The Board notes that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security named mortuary workers as "critical infrastructure workers" on March 19, 2020, which affirms the vital role our state's funeral service professionals have in responding to the pandemic. I have attached for your review and consideration information on this issue released yesterday by the National Funeral Directors Association. Further, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association [ICCFA] has issued a national appeal for the recognition of funeral service professions as "essential services" in declarations of "shelter-in-place" orders. This key advocacy organization suggests the following definition be included in such orders:

*For Purposes of This Order, "Essential Businesses" means:*

*Deathcare Professionals and Essential Infrastructure, including licensed funeral homes, crematories, cemeteries, as well as all suppliers of funeral products to funeral service providers, which provide essential services that are critical to the health, safety and sanitation of the community.*

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Letter: Governor Roy A. Cooper

March 20, 2020

Your agreement to include funeral professions in any prospective Executive Orders imposing necessary restrictions on work, travel and social interaction among North Carolina citizens is critical. By recognizing our professional funeral services in North Carolina as "essential services" in such orders, you will facilitate and enable the delivery of needed supplies and priority access to Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] which are vital in the safe preparation and disposition of decedents.

We earnestly hope that such restrictions will not be necessary as this crisis continues. We would be irresponsible, however, if we did not alert you to the critical role our funeral professions in North Carolina have in responding to this crisis.

Please know our deep appreciation for your assertive and positive leadership since the beginning of this unanticipated crisis that threatens North Carolina citizens. We acknowledge your unconditional commitment to North Carolina and the protection of its citizens, and we are glad to partner with you in responding to the devastating effects of this virus.

With appreciation,



Mark Blake, President  
NC Board of Funeral Service

Cc: Stephen E. Davis, Executive Director  
John Harris, President, Funeral Directors and Morticians Association of NC  
Gary Overcash, President, NC Funeral Directors Association  
Bill Gaffney, President, NC Cemetery Commission