

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government

BILL: CS/SB 598

INTRODUCER: Banking and Insurance Committee and Senator Truenow

SUBJECT: Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services

DATE: February 24, 2026 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Knudson</u>	<u>Knudson</u>	<u>BI</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>Betta</u>	<u>AEG</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3.	_____	_____	<u>FP</u>	_____

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:
COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 598 revises chapter 497, Florida Statutes, the Florida Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services Act (Act), which provides for the regulation of funeral and cemetery services.

The bill prohibits licensees from contracting to become the exclusive or sole provider of funeral, cremation, refrigeration, or removal services for any entity that provides medical, palliative, or other end-of-life care and services to the general public.

The bill allows licensees to dispose of human remains that have been in their lawful possession for at least 90 days if the legally authorized person of the decedent fails, neglects, or refuses to direct the disposition. Licensees may not be held liable for doing so. The bill also provides that if, after 90 days (current law is 120 days) from the time of cremation the cremated remains have not been claimed, the funeral or direct disposal establishment may dispose of the cremated remains.

The bill provides that the minimum acreage of a cemetery must be contiguous, except that parcels of land divided solely by a public right-of-way or public road may be considered contiguous, provided the parcels are in close geographic proximity and form a unified cemetery property.

To attract new practitioners of funeral and cemetery services in Florida, the bill revises licensure requirements under the Act, providing that:

- A licensure by endorsement as an embalmer, funeral director, or a combination funeral director and embalmer for an applicant that holds a valid license in another state and has at least five years' experience of licensed practice in that state does not require educational or testing requirements other than passage of the examination on local, state, and federal laws and rules relating to the disposition of dead human bodies.
- The educational requirements that a funeral director licensure applicant who has not completed the educational credentials required for the license are revised to remove passage of a college course in mortuary or funeral service law.
- Licensure as a combination funeral director and embalmer intern, a licensure that is available to applicants who have not completed the educational credentials required for a combination license as both a funeral director and embalmer, requires either an associate degree or higher from an accredited college or university or current enrollment in an accredited college in an accredited course of study in mortuary science.

The bill exempts prepaid funeral contracts from the insurable interest requirements of the Florida Insurance Code. The bill also allows a preneed licensee to send written notice to the last known e-mail or mailing address of the purchaser or beneficiary's legally authorized person that the preneed licensee intends to distribute funds related to unfulfilled services.

The bill does not impact state revenues and expenditures. *See Section V., Fiscal Statement below.*

The bill's effective date is July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services

Chapter 497, F.S., known as the Florida Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services Act (Act), provides for the regulation of funeral and cemetery services.¹ The Act authorizes the Board of Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services (Board) within the Department of Financial Services (DFS) to regulate cemeteries, columbaria, cremation services and practices, cemetery companies, dealers and monument builders, funeral directors, and funeral establishments.²

Section 20.121(4), F.S., creates the Board of Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services (Board) within the Division of Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services of the DFS. The Board acts as the licensing and rulemaking authority for certain matters related to examinations and other substantive requirements for licensure within the death care industry under ch. 497, F.S., including facility requirements;³

¹ See Section 497.001, F.S.

² Sections 497.101 and 497.103, F.S.

³ See s. 497.103(1)(a)-(cc), F.S. Licenses available to natural persons include: embalmer apprentice and intern; funeral directors and intern; funeral director and embalmer, direct disposer, monument establishment sales agent, and preneed sales agent. Section 497.141(12)(a), F.S. Licenses available to natural persons, corporations, limited liability companies, and partnerships include: funeral establishment, centralized embalming facility, refrigeration facility, direct disposal establishment, monument establishment, cinerator facility, removal service, preneed sales business under s. 497.453, F.S., and cemetery. Section 497.141(12)(b)-(c), F.S.

The Board has broad authority over licensure and examination of applicants for various licenses including:

- Authority to determine any and all criteria for licensure;
- Authority to specify who may conduct practical examination;
- Authority to specify the content of examinations for licensure, both written and practical, and the relative weighting of areas examined, and grading criteria, and determination of what constitutes a passing grade;
- Authority to strike any examination question determined before or after an examination to be inappropriate for any reason;
- Authority to specify which national examinations or parts thereof shall or shall not be required or accepted regarding Florida licensure;
- Authority to determine time limits and substantive requirements regarding reexamination of applicants who fail any portion of a licensing examination; and
- Authority to determine substantive requirements and conditions relating to apprenticeships and internships, and temporary licensure pending examination.⁴

The Board must have 10 members, nine of whom are to be appointed by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and confirmed by the Senate and one member must be the State Health Officer, or his or her designee.⁵ The composition of the Board must be as follows:

- The State Health Officer;
- Two funeral directors who are:
 - Licensed under part III of ch. 497, F.S., as funeral directors, and
 - Associated with a funeral establishment;
- One funeral director who is:
 - Licensed under part III of ch. 497, F.S., and
 - Associated with a funeral establishment licensed under part III of ch. 497, F.S., that has a valid preneed license issued pursuant to ch. 497, F.S.
- Two persons whose primary occupation is associated with a licensed cemetery;
- Three consumers who:
 - Are residents of Florida;
 - Have never been licensed funeral directors or embalmers;
 - Are not connected with a cemetery or licensed cemetery company;
 - Are not connected to the death care industry or the practice of embalming, funeral directing, or direct disposition;
 - At least one of which is at least 60 years of age; and
 - At least one of which is a licensed certified public accountant; and
- One principal of a monument establishment licensed under ch. 497, F.S., as a monument builder.⁶

Two or more members may not be principals or employees of the same company or partnership, or group of companies or partnerships under common control.⁷ Board members are appointed for

⁴ Section 497.103(1)(a)-(g), F.S.

⁵ Section 497.101(1), F.S.

⁶ Section 497.101(2), F.S.

⁷ *Id.*

a four-year term; however, a member may not serve for more than eight consecutive years (except for the State Health Officer, who serves so long as he or she holds the office).⁸

Funeral Director and Embalmer Licensure

The practice of funeral services is divided into three relevant licenses. A person may be licensed as a funeral director,⁹ an embalmer,¹⁰ or with a combination license for the practice of funeral directing and embalming.¹¹

Applicants for an embalmer license must take courses in mortuary science, complete a one-year internship, and pass an examination on the subjects of the theory and practice of embalming, restorative art, pathology, anatomy, microbiology, chemistry, hygiene, public health and sanitation, and local, state, and federal laws and rules relating to the disposition of dead human bodies.¹² Applicants for a combination funeral directing and embalmer license must meet the requirements for an embalmer's license, as well as take approved courses in funeral service arts, and pass the funeral services arts section of the national board examination.¹³

Applicants for a funeral director-only license are required to take classes in both mortuary science and funeral service arts, complete a one year internship, pass the state and federal laws and rules examination relating to the disposition of human remains, and an examination on the theory and practice of funeral directing and funeral service arts.¹⁴

Funeral Establishment Licensure

Section 497.380, F.S., provides for the regulation of funeral establishments. Each licensed funeral establishment must have one full-time funeral director in charge.¹⁵ A funeral establishment must:

- Be a place at a specific street address or location;
- Consist of at least 1,250 contiguous interior square feet;
- Maintain or make arrangements for the refrigeration and storage of dead human bodies handled and stored by the establishment; and
- Maintain or make arrangements for a preparation room equipped with necessary ventilation and drainage and containing necessary instruments for embalming dead human bodies.¹⁶

Storage, Preservation, and Transportation of Human Remains

Human remains may only be stored at a licensed establishment or facility licensed under ch. 497, F.S., or a health care facility, medical examiner's facility, morgue, or cemetery holding facility.¹⁷ A dead human body may not be held in any place or in transit over 24 hours after death

⁸ Section 497.101(3), F.S.

⁹ Section 497.372, F.S.

¹⁰ Section 497.368, F.S.

¹¹ Section 497.376, F.S.

¹² Section 497.368, F.S.

¹³ Section 497.376, F.S.

¹⁴ Section 497.373, F.S.

¹⁵ Section 497.380(7), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 497.380(1), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 497.386(1), F.S.

or pending final disposition unless the body is maintained at a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below or is embalmed or otherwise preserved in a manner approved by the licensing authority.¹⁸

In an emergency situation, including the abandonment of any licensed establishments or facilities, the DFS is authorized to enter and secure certain locations.¹⁹ In such a situation, the DFS may remove human remains and cremated remains.²⁰ These locations include:

- An establishment or facility licensed under ch. 497, F.S.
- Any medical examiner's facility or morgue; and
- A cemetery holding facility.²¹

Cremation

Cremation of human remains in Florida is governed by s. 497.607, F.S. Cremation of human remains requires written authorization from a legally authorized person.²² The cremation must be performed within 48 hours after a specified time which has been agreed to in writing by the person authorizing the cremation.²³ If, after a period of 120 days from the time of cremation the cremated remains have not been claimed, the funeral or direct disposal establishment may dispose of the cremated remains, which may include scattering them at sea or placing them in a licensed cemetery scattering garden or pond or in a church columbarium or otherwise disposing of the remains as provided by rule of the Board.²⁴

Cemetery Companies

A person seeking a cemetery license must apply for a license.²⁵ The proposed cemetery must contain at least 30 contiguous acres and the application must state the exact number of acres in the proposed cemetery.²⁶ Any land dedicated for use as a cemetery, which is in excess of a minimum of 30 contiguous acres, may be sold, conveyed, or disposed of by the licensee, after obtaining written approval of the DFS for use by the new owner for purposes other than as a cemetery.²⁷ All of the human remains that have been previously interred therein, if any, must first have been removed from the land proposed to be sold, conveyed, or disposed of.²⁸

Solicitation of Goods or Services

The Board is charged with protecting the public from solicitation of sales of burial rights, merchandise, or services by licensees which are intimidating, overreaching, fraudulent, or misleading; which utilizes undue influence; or which takes undue advantage of a person's

¹⁸ Section 497.386(2), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 497.386(5), F.S.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² Section 497.607(1), F.S.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Section 497.607(3)(a), F.S.

²⁵ Section 497.263(2)(a), F.S.

²⁶ Section 497.263(2)(g), F.S.

²⁷ Section 497.270(2), F.S.

²⁸ *Id.*

ignorance or emotional vulnerability.²⁹ At-need solicitation of sales of burial rights, merchandise, or services is prohibited. The family or next of kin of a deceased person may not be contacted to sell services or merchandise unless the person making contact has been initially called or contacted by the family or next of kin and requested to provide services or merchandise.³⁰

Preneed Contracts - Cancellation or Default

Part IV of ch. 497, F.S., governs preneed funeral merchandise or service contract businesses and preneed burial merchandise or service contract businesses. Such businesses are exempt from the Florida Insurance Code.³¹ A “preneed contract” is any arrangement or method for which the provider of funeral merchandise or services receives any payment in advance for funeral or burial merchandise and services after the death of the contract beneficiary.³² Persons who sell preneed contracts are licensed by the Board.³³ Any person who receives funds under a preneed contract for funeral services or merchandise or burial services or merchandise to deposit certain percentages of the amounts received with a trust company operating pursuant to ch. 660, F.S., with a national or state bank holding trust powers, or with a federal or state savings and loan association holding trust powers.³⁴

A preneed licensee must provide to the purchaser or to the beneficiary’s legally authorized person written notice of the licensee’s intent to distribute funds if any obligation of the licensee remains to be fulfilled under the contract, upon the occurrence of the earliest of any of the following events:

- Fifty years after the date of execution of the preneed contract by the purchaser.
- The beneficiary of the preneed contract attains the age of 105 years of age or older.
- The social security number of the beneficiary of the preneed contract, as shown on the contract, is contained within the United States Social Security Administration Death Master File.³⁵

Such written notice must be provided by certified mail, registered mail, or permitted delivery service, return receipt requested, to the last known mailing address of the purchaser or the beneficiary’s legally authorized person, whichever is applicable, as provided to the preneed licensee.³⁶

Insurable Interest; Personal Insurance

A person of legal capacity may procure or effect an insurance contract on his or her own life or body for the benefit of any person but may not procure or cause to be procured an insurance contract on the life of another individual unless the benefits under such contract are payable to the individual insured or his or her personal representatives, or to any person having, at the time

²⁹ Section 497.164(1) and (2), F.S.

³⁰ Section 497.164(5), F.S.

³¹ Section 497.450, F.S.

³² Section 497.005(62), F.S.

³³ Section 497.453, F.S.

³⁴ Section 497.458, F.S.

³⁵ Section 497.459(7)(a), F.S.

³⁶ Section 497.459(7)(b)1., F.S.

such contract was made, an insurable interest in the individual insured.³⁷ Other than a policy of group life insurance or group or blanket accident, health, or disability insurance, a contract of insurance upon a person may not be effectuated unless, on or before the time of entering into such contract, the person insured applies for or consents in writing to the contract and its terms.³⁸ Insurable interest requirements exist to prevent the moral hazard associated with third parties benefiting financially because of the death of the insured or because of damage to the insured's real or personal property.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 497.164, F.S., relating to solicitation of goods or services, to provide that a licensee under ch. 497, F.S., may not enter into a contract, agreement, or other arrangement in which that licensee or any affiliated licensee becomes the exclusive or sole provider of funeral, cremation, refrigeration, or removal services for any entity that provides medical, palliative, or other end-of-life care and services to the general public.

Sections 2 and 3 amend ss. 497.263 and 497.270, F.S., relating to cemetery companies and licenses required and minimum acreage and sale or disposition of cemetery lands, respectively, to provide that the minimum acreage of a cemetery must be contiguous, except that parcels of land divided solely by a public right-of-way or public road may be considered contiguous, provided the parcels are in close geographic proximity and form a unified cemetery property. The cemetery license application must state the exact number of acres in the proposed cemetery and must identify any public rights-of-way or roads dividing the parcels. Parcels located in separate or distant geographic areas, even if along the same roadway or corridor, do not satisfy the contiguity requirement.

Section 4 amends s. 487.369, F.S., relating to embalmers, to provide that licensure by endorsement as an embalmer for an applicant that holds a valid license in good standing to practice embalming in another state and has engaged in the full-time, licensed practice of embalming in that state for at least five years does not require any educational or testing requirements other than passage of the examination on local, state, and federal laws and rules relating to the disposition of dead human bodies required under s. 497.368, F.S.

Section 5 amends s. 497.374, F.S., to provide that licensure by endorsement as a funeral director for an applicant that holds a valid license in good standing to practice funeral directing in another state and has engaged in the full-time, licensed practice of funeral directing in that state for at least five years does not require any educational or testing requirements other than passage of the examination on local, state, and federal laws and rules relating to the disposition of dead human bodies required under s. 497.373(2)(b), F.S.

Section 6 amends s. 497.375, F.S., relating to funeral directing, to remove one of the three educational requirements that a funeral director licensure applicant must meet if seeking licensure despite not completing the educational credentials required for the license. The bill eliminates the requirement to receive a passing grade in a college credit course in mortuary law

³⁷ Section 627.404(1), F.S.

³⁸ Section 627.404(5), F.S.

or funeral service law and in a college credit course in ethics. The other two requirements retained by the bill are that the applicant must hold an associate degree or higher from an accredited college or university and must be enrolled in and attending a licensing authority-approved course of study in mortuary science or funeral service arts required for licensure as a funeral director.

Section 7 amends s. 497.376, F.S., relating to license as a funeral director and embalmer, to provide that an applicant for licensure for a combination license by endorsement as a funeral director and embalmer under ss. 497.373 and 497.369, F.S., respectively, is not required to meet any educational or testing requirements other than passage of the examination on local, state, and federal laws and rules relating to the disposition of dead human bodies required under ss. 497.373(2)(b) and 497.369(4), F.S.

Section 8 amends s. 497.377, F.S., relating to combination funeral director and embalmer to revise the requirements for licensure as a combination funeral director and embalmer intern, a licensure that is available to applicants who have not completed the educational credentials required for a combination license as both a funeral director and embalmer. The bill provides that such applicants, to obtain the intern license, must:

- Hold an associate degree or higher in any field from a college or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education; or
- Is currently enrolled in and attending a college accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) in a course of study in mortuary science accredited by ABFSE.

Current law requires that to obtain the intern license, the applicant must meet the latter of these requirements and must also have completed at least 75 percent of the course of study in mortuary science and have received a passing grade in a college course in mortuary law or funeral service law.

Section 9 amends s. 497.386, F.S., relating to storage, preservation, and transportation of human remains, to provide that if any human remains have been in the lawful possession of any licensee or licensed facility for 90 days or more, and the legally authorized person of the decedent fails, neglects, or refuses to direct the disposition of the remains, the licensee or licensed facility may dispose of the human remains and licensee or licensed facility who disposes of such human remains pursuant to this subsection may not be held liable for any action arising out of such disposal.

Section 10 amends s. 497.459, F.S., relating to cancellation of, or default on, preneed contracts, to provide that for purposes of ensuring the performance of unfulfilled preneed contracts, the required written notice by the preneed licensee to the purchaser or to the beneficiary's legally authorized person of the preneed licensee's intent to distribute funds in accordance with the terms of the preneed contract, if any obligation of the preneed licensee remains to be fulfilled under the contract, may be sent to the to the last known e-mail or mailing address of the purchaser or the beneficiary's legally authorized person, whichever is applicable, as provided to the preneed licensee.

Section 11 amends s. 497.607, F.S., relating to cremation, to provide that if any person who intends to provide for the cremation of the deceased, if, after 90 days (current law is 120 days)

from the time of cremation the cremated remains have not been claimed, the funeral or direct disposal establishment may dispose of the cremated remains as provided under s. 497.607, F.S.

Section 12 amends s. 627.404, F.S., to exempt prepaid funeral contracts from the requirement that an insurance contract may not be carried out unless, on or before the time of entering into such contract, the person insured, having legal capacity to contract, applies for or consents in writing to the contract and its terms.

Section 13 reenacts s. 497.260, F.S, relating to cemeteries and exemptions, investigations and mediation, for purposes of incorporating the amendment made by the bill to s. 497.263, F.S.

Section 14 provides that bill is effective July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Endorsement licensure applicants will no longer be required to pay for a national examination, which is administered in two parts, with each part costing \$285. The number of applicants financially impacted by the provisions within the bill is unknown and indeterminate.³⁹

³⁹ Department of Financial Services, *2026 Legislative Bill Analysis SB 598* (Jan. 5, 2026), pg. 4 (2026).

The bill provides an opportunity for experienced out of state deathcare providers to work in Florida as the bill amends educational requirements. This opportunity may have a positive, yet indeterminate, impact on Florida's funeral and cemetery industry.

C. **Government Sector Impact:**

The bill does not impact state expenditures or revenues.⁴⁰

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 497.164, 497.263, 497.270, 497.369, 497.374, 497.375, 497.376, 497.377, 497.386, 497.459, 497.607, 627.404, 497.260

IX. Additional Information:

A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Banking and Insurance on February 11, 2026:

The committee substitute:

- Deletes from the bill an amendment to s. 497.169, F.S., that would have limited total liability for damages to \$200,000 in a civil action for negligence brought against a licensee under ch. 497, F.S.
- Deletes from the bill amendments to ss. 497.602, 497.604, and 497.607, F.S., which would have eliminated licenses for direct disposers and direct disposer establishments. Licensed direct disposers may engage in a limited scope of practice that allows them to sell services to the public for lawfully facilitating cremation without preparation by embalming and without any attendant services or rites.

B. **Amendments:**

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

⁴⁰ *Id.*