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The Philadelphia Alliance

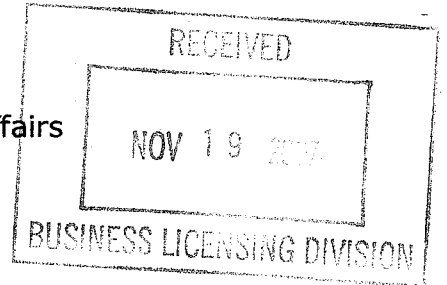
Representing Community Providers for People with Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Chemical Dependency Needs.
One Winding Dr., Monroe Bldg., Suite 201 • Philadelphia, PA 19131 • Tel. 215.877.6400 • Fax. 215.877.4748 • www.philalliance.org

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

November 14, 2007

Michelle T. Smey, Administrative Officer
State Board of Funeral Directors
Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 2649
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649



Re: Proposed Regulations
#16A-4815 (Pre-Need Funeral Arrangements); and
#16A-4816 (Pre-Need Activities of Unlicensed Employees)

Dear Ms. Smey and Members of the Board:

The Philadelphia Alliance of specialized agencies is a professional organization of 42 provider agencies in Philadelphia that serve more than 50,000 people in Pennsylvania with needs related to mental retardation, mental illness, and chemical dependency.

I am writing you today on behalf of our members to express our opposition to the regulations proposed by the Board regarding Pre-Arranged Funerals and the use of unlicensed individuals for the sale of prearranged services. The regulations, as proposed, threaten to eliminate the willingness of funeral directors to provide pre-planned services and restrict the ability of consumers to obtain affordable prearranged funerals.

The proposed regulations would:

- (1) Require a licensed funeral director to conduct all related activities personally;
- (2) Burden the funeral director with time consuming and costly quarterly reporting;
- (3) Force the funeral director to allow all contracts be transferable at the discretion of the consumer without addressing the irrevocable nature of such arrangements, [Maintaining the irrevocability of pre-need funds is very important for income and asset determinations in Social Security or MA programs.]; and
- (4) Require notification of every customer regarding the ability to transfer the contract in the event of a change in ownership. By placing these unnecessary burdens on funeral directors, you would be devaluing pre-need funeral planning, which a significant segment of the population wants and values.

- Jeffrey Wilush
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- Denise Brown
President-Elect
- Michael Link
Vice President
- Jerry Skillings
Secretary
- Paula Cullinan
Treasurer
- Sharon Kauffman
Immediate Past-President
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- Barber National Institute
- CareLink Community Support Services
- Carson Valley School
- Catholic Social Services
- Center for Autism
- Children's Crisis Treatment Center
- Children's Services, Inc.
- Community Integrated Services
- Devereux Community Services of Phila.
- Elwyn, Inc.
- EMAN Community Living, Inc.
- Gaudenzia, Inc.
- Horizon House, Inc.
- Intercultural Family Services, Inc.
- JEVS Human Services
- Jewish Family & Children's Services
- KenCCID
- Ken-Crest Services
- Lynch Community Homes
- Mental Health Assoc., SE PA
- NorthEast Treatment Centers
- Northern Home for Children & Family Services
- PDDC/ARC
- Pennsylvania Mentor
- Philadelphia Consultation Center
- Philadelphia Health Management Corp.
- Philadelphia Mental Health Center
- Philadelphia OIC
- Programs Employing People
- Quality Progressions
- Resources for Human Development, Inc.
- Self Help Movement, Inc.
- Special People in Northeast, Inc.
- St. John's Community Services
- Step-By-Step
- Tabor Children's Services
- The Association for Independent Growth, Inc.
- The Salvation Army
- United Cerebral Palsy Association of Phila.
- Walker Memorial Training Center
- Wedge Medical Center
- Wordsworth Academy

As service providers for individuals with disabilities, our goal is to provide independence and dignity during the lifetime of these individuals. Additionally, there is a moral obligation to these people and those who care for them to provide the same dignity upon their death. Through prearrangement plans an individual's team, along with the individual with disabilities and their families, are able to plan the service that they want. Through the pre-payment plans, what was once impossible for the people we support is now a reality.

As the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Alliance, I am deeply concerned about the insensitivity regarding how individuals with disabilities (often uninsurable) will be laid to rest under these regulatory changes. As a potential customer, whose parents have prearranged their funerals, I am alarmed that the Board would propose regulations that would limit my ability to do the same.

The members of The Philadelphia Alliance are puzzled why the State Board of Funeral Directors would propose regulations that would restrict access to prearranged funerals. It is difficult to see how these regulations protect the public.

I thank you for reviewing our concerns; and I encourage you to reevaluate both the need for and the effect of these proposed regulations, and do so with an eye on protecting the public by allowing free competition and the ability to make informed, unemotional decisions. I am happy to discuss the concerns expressed here at public hearings on the regulations or at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "T".

Tim Wilson
Executive Director