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**For immediate release**

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### **Secretary of State Jim Condos Proposes Streamlined Professional Licensing Rules for Funeral Directors, Barbers, and Cosmetologists**

*Montpelier, VT* – The Vermont Secretary of State’s Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) filed proposed rules to reform licensing requirements for funeral directors, barbers, cosmetologists, nail technicians, and estheticians this month. These reforms fall under the scope of a Federal Department of Labor grant awarded to OPR last year and are part of a broader effort to update existing licensing regulations to better reflect the needs of Vermont professionals, consumers, and businesses.

“Because of our work on licensing reform at OPR, Vermont has become a national model for other states,” said Secretary Condos. “These rule filings showcase our approach: cutting red tape where it is necessary to find the right-fit regulation, and appropriate career development pathways, to grow our workforce and ensure protection for the public.”

The changes include the creation of an in-state path to licensure through college level coursework and an apprenticeship style work experience for funeral directors, at one-fifth the estimated cost of formal funeral schooling. CCV has already created curriculum that meets the education requirements, with students planning to enroll this fall. Currently there are no higher education institutions in-state that offer this pathway for aspiring Vermont funeral directors.

The proposed rule for barbers, cosmetologists, nail technicians, and estheticians will, among other changes, improve the availability and structure of apprenticeships, give more flexibility to beauty schools, make revisions to testing requirements, and cap mandatory minimum school-based training hours, which will reduce costs for Vermonters entering the profession.

“The alternative path rule for funeral directors directly responds to a statewide workforce shortage in the industry, creating a far more affordable Vermont-based path for aspiring funeral directors that didn’t previously exist,” said Lauren Hibbert, OPR Director. “The rule for barbers and cosmetologists is also expected to reduce barriers to entry, as well as promote competition and innovation.”

OPR is seeking input on the proposed rules. Public hearings are scheduled to be held at OPR’s 89 Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor location in Montpelier on May 30<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm for the funeral director rule and June 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 pm for barbers and cosmetologists. Comments can be submitted to [opr.comment@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:opr.comment@sec.state.vt.us). More information can be found on OPR’s funeral profession website and the barbers and cosmetologist profession website.

OPR, a Division of the Secretary of State’s Office, administers approximately 50 professional licensing programs and issues approximately 70,000 credentials to Vermonters doing business and living in Vermont. OPR ensures applicants are qualified for licensure, sets standards for the profession by proposing statutes and adopting administrative rules, and, with the assistance of OPR staff, investigates complaints of unprofessional conduct, taking disciplinary action against a licensee when necessary. More information on OPR can be found at [www.sec.state.vt.us/professional-regulation](http://www.sec.state.vt.us/professional-regulation).

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