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### **Secretary of State Jim Condos Announces New Streamlined Professional Licensing Rules for Funeral Directors**

*Montpelier, VT* – Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos announced a new licensing model for funeral directors, designed to expand pathways to licensure, minimize student debt, and allow qualified Vermonters to train for their chosen profession more efficiently, without having to leave home.

Funeral directors in Vermont are licensed by the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR), a division of the Secretary of State's office. The new licensing rules were reviewed and approved Thursday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR).

"These rule changes showcase our approach at OPR: cutting red tape where necessary to find the right-fit regulation, and appropriate career development pathways, to grow our workforce and ensure public protection," said Secretary Condos. "We're thankful to the Vermont Funeral Directors Association, and professionals in the industry, who worked with us on these rules, and to LCAR for their support of this important reform."

Vermont has no in-state funeral schools. The new rules establish an in-state path to licensure that combines college-level coursework with apprenticeship-style experience, making it possible for Vermonters to become licensed at one-fifth the estimated cost of formal funeral schooling. The Community College of Vermont (CCV) has already developed a certificate program that meets the education requirements, with students planning to enroll this fall.

"This nation leading program allows us to home grow our workforce in an affordable and professional way that creates opportunity for continued success and growth for our vocation," stated Chris Palermo, President of the Vermont Funeral Directors Association. "We are proud of the partnership we have had with the Secretary of State's Office and Community College of Vermont. "

These reforms fall under the scope of a United States Department of Labor grant, awarded to OPR last year, to facilitate a broader effort of updating existing licensing regulations to better reflect the needs of Vermont professionals, consumers, and businesses.

"The new rules directly respond 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 forward thinking and collaborative model used to develop these rules is reflective of OPR's approach to licensing reform; an approach that ultimately makes it easier for Vermont professionals in various industries to advance their careers."

OPR administers 48 professional licensing programs and issues approximately 75,000 credentials to Vermonters doing business and living in Vermont.

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