

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

March 19, 2024

**Compassion and Equity: Waiving the Medical Examiner’s Transportation and Storage Fee for Los Angeles County Residents**

The loss of a loved one is never easy, and it can be accompanied by pain, sadness, and shock, especially if the death is sudden or unexpected. Regardless of how they pass, the loss may mean families and loved ones are not prepared for the financial costs of death and burial. The national average cost for a funeral is between \$3,000 to \$10,000 and the purchasing of a cemetery plot, will increase the costs to \$6,500 to \$20,000. These costs may cover embalming, special handling, service, among others, including in LA County (County), the Department of Medical Examiner’s (DME) transportation and storage fee of \$400 for transporting the body of the deceased from the home or site of death to the DME where their body will undergo an examination.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these families are individuals who may be unable to pay for the

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<sup>1</sup> Required by Los Angeles County Code Section 2.22.100 (Charge for removing and keeping dead bodies).

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transportation and storage fee, but given the circumstances, it leaves them with very little choice — the body needs to be moved.

The DME's own analysis showed that between Fiscal Year 2016-17 and Fiscal Year 2021-2022, the Department's ability to collect bills has been between 56% and 63%, indicating the financial hardships experienced by the families they serve. This remittance rate includes the Treasurer Tax Collector's efforts which gained a collection of 6.9% (\$50,550 out of the \$732,665 in FY 21-22) of the transportation and storage fees that were billed to the legal next of kin.

The County should take every and all opportunity to help reduce or eliminate burdensome costs to ensure everyone has a chance at dignity.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Medical Examiner to:

1. Provide transportation and storage fee waivers to all LA County residents starting immediately after the passage of the motion;
2. During the 180 days, prior to the issuance of the report back, collect data, including demographic information, being sensitive to privacy and HIPPA, to assess and evaluate need and impact; and
3. In collaboration with the Chief Executive Officer, identify a funding source to provide transportation and storage waivers for all LA County residents during the assessment period.

**I, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Medical Examiner to provide the Board with a report back, in writing, in 180 days, on the data collected with recommendations and with relevant implementation plans, on the future

of the Department of Medical Examiner's Transportation and Storage fees.

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