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Health Services
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

April 17, 2024

**Los Angeles County
Board of Supervisors**

Hilda L. Solis
First District


Holly J. Mitchell
Second District

Lindsey P. Horvath
Third District

Janice K. Hahn
Fourth District

Kathryn Barger
Fifth District

TO: Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Janice K. Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Christina R. Ghaly, M.D. 
Director

SUBJECT: **LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE OF DECEDENT AFFAIRS:
CREMATION FEES (REPORT REQUEST FROM THE
MARCH 19, 2024, MEETING)**

Christina R. Ghaly, M.D.
Director

Hal F. Yee, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.
Chief Deputy Director, Clinical Affairs

Nina J. Park, M.D.
Chief Deputy Director, Population Health

Elizabeth M. Jacobi, J.D.
Administrative Deputy

Overview of the Los Angeles County (LA County) Office of Decedent Affairs (ODA)

ODA, which is a part of the LA County Department of Health Services, is responsible for managing the morgue services at LA General Medical Center for its patients. ODA also coordinates the management and disposition of indigent and unclaimed dead for LA County, along with managing the LA County Crematorium and Cemetery. If a relative/guardian is searching for a deceased relative in the possession of ODA, they may contact us by phone at (323) 409-7161.

The cremation fee is \$352, (and \$466 if transportation is required). The fees are collected at the release of the decedents' remains/ashes.

ODA Waivers

ODA does not have the authority to pardon cremation fees and cannot provide waivers for those expressing economic hardship. The Board of Supervisors has the sole authority to waive fees. If a deceased individual is identified, and their relative/guardian expresses economic hardship in retrieving the remains, ODA cremates the deceased and their remains are held for two years.

It is important to note, that requests related to economic hardship assistance is infrequent. ODA receives on average one request per year for financial assistance.

The amount recovered in cremation fees in Fiscal Year 2022-23 was \$149,136.

If you have any questions, you may contact me or your staff may contact Edgar Solis, LA General Medical Center's Chief Operating Officer by email at esolis@dhs.lacounty.gov.

CRG: es

c: Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors

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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER
1104 N. MISSION RD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033



Odey Ukpo, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner

September 19, 2024

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Odey C. Ukpo M.D., M.S. *OCU*
Chief Medical Examiner

SUBJECT: **REPORT BACK TO THE BOARD: COMPASSION AND EQUITY: WAIVING THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE FEE FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY RESIDENTS (BOARD AGENDA OF MARCH 19, 2024, ITEM NO. 8)**

On March 19, 2024, your Honorable Board (Board) unanimously instructed the Chief Medical Examiner, in collaboration with the Chief Executive Officer, within 30 days after the passage of the motion, to identify and provide funding to waive transportation and storage fees for all County residents during the 180 days assessment period; collect data, including demographic information, being sensitive to privacy and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), to assess and evaluate need and impact, during the 180 days prior to the issuance of the report; and instruct the Chief Medical Examiner to report back to the Board in writing in 180 days on the data collected with recommendations and relevant implementation plans, on the future of the Department of Medical Examiner's Transportation and Storage fees. (24-0991)

Funding to Waive Transportation and Storage Fees:

The Department of Medical Examiner's (DME) has successfully worked with the Chief Executive Office to identify and provide funding to waive transportation and storage fees for all County residents during the 180 days assessment period. The Department projects the total fees waived during the 180-day assessment period to be \$360,000. Based on this finding, the DME has worked in collaboration with the Chief Executive Officer and have submitted a request for funding in the 2024-2025 supplemental budget. The request has not been finalized at the time of the submission of this report.

Data Collection:

The tables below shows a summary of the data collected during the assessment period of March 21, 2024, through August 28, 2024, regarding the decedents falling under the jurisdiction of the DME and their next of kin:

Accreditations:

*National Association of Medical Examiners
California Medical Association-Continuing Medical Education
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education*

*American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/LAB-International
Peace Officer Standards and Training Certified*

Table 1. Distribution of race of decedents with waivers for transportation and storage.

Race	Total
African American	123
Asian	105
Caucasian	209
Latinx	355
Unknown/Other	33

Table 2. Total decedents by district with waivers for transportation and storage fees.

Supervisory District	Decedent Total
1	154
2	181
3	153
4	189
5	148

Table 3. Total next of kin constituents by district with waivers for transportation and storage fees.

Supervisory District	Next of Kin Constituents Total
1	98
2	119
3	106
4	141
5	116

Table 4. Total decedents by race/ethnicity by district with waivers for transportation and storage fees.

Supervisory District	African American	Asian	Latinx	Caucasian	Unknown/Other Race
1	7	36	88	19	4
2	57	18	75	27	4
3	10	16	50	65	12
4	19	24	93	51	2
5	30	11	49	47	11

Summary and Next Steps:

The most common ethnic group in Los Angeles County that fall below the poverty line are Latinx followed by Caucasians(1). These two groups combined represent 68% of those benefiting from waiver of transportation and storage fees. African Americans account for 7% of the Los Angeles County population and therefore their representative share of poverty in the County is relatively low. However, African Americans poverty rate in Los Angeles County

Each Supervisor
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is twice that of Caucasians(2). This supports that the burden of transportation and storage fees are with individuals where the highest poverty rates in Los Angeles County are expected. It is my recommendation to continue waivers for transportation and storage fees indefinitely while seeking ongoing funding in the budget.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 765-9679, or your staff may contact Chief Deputy Director, Akiko Tagawa at (323) 343-0778, or via email at atagawa@me.lacounty.gov.

OU:ou:at

c: Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Each Board Deputy

References

1. Los Angeles County. Data USA. <http://datausa.io/profile/geo/los-angeles-county-ca>
2. Racial Disparities in Five Charts Los Angeles County. www.laalmanac.com