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To ccc@fhh.gov.hk
cc
bcc
Subject Public Consultation on Licensing Scheme for Private Columbaria
 Urgent Return receipt Sign Encrypt

Food and Health Bureau,

I am writing to set forth my views on the public consultation on licensing scheme for private columbaria.

I am supportive of a private columbaria licensing board. However, operators of columbariums must not be allowed to disregard existing zoning and land lease rules under any new licensing scheme that is enacted. All illegal columbariums currently in existence and all illegal columbariums that continue to operate at the time a licensing scheme comes into effect must be shut down and the government should take enforcement actions. No columbariums should be allowed to apply under the licensing scheme and receive a license if they have violated in the past or are in violation of any land and planning rules. Further, I disagree with the proposal to allow an 18-month grace period for existing columbariums to sort out breaches of land and planning rules. Again, any columbariums in breach of land and planning rules must be shut down immediately regardless whether a licensing scheme is ever enacted. I am also doubtful that Food and Hygiene Department as the proposed enforcement agency of the licensing scheme is appropriate.

I also disagree with any proposed exemption for undertakers who provide temporary storage of remains. Such facilities create noise, smoke and traffic disturbances.

As to the exemption to allow families to keep the cremains of deceased family members at home, I am supportive of setting a number over which the keeping of such remains can be defined as a "private columbarium."

I agree that operators of private columbariums who are operating without a license should be subject to daily fines and / or imprisonment. I note that the proposed rate of fines and proposed term of imprisonment is not specified. These fines/terms should be sufficiently stringent to act as a meaningful deterrent to disregard of the licensing requirements.

Finally, please expedite the introduction of the Bill into the Legislative Council. Waiting until the fourth quarter of 2013 is too long.

Sincerely,
Melanie Moore

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