

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 6-19

INTRODUCED BY: Medical Student Section

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SUBJECT: Ethical Use of Cadavers in Medical Education and Research

Whereas, unclaimed persons in Maryland are used at medical education institutions, or sold by the Anatomy Board to third parties for as much as \$2400 per body;¹ and

Whereas, Maryland medical schools are among only 12% of medical schools that use unclaimed persons for anatomy education;² and

Whereas, bodies are considered unclaimed after being left at the anatomy board for 72 hours, which may be before families may know what happened to their loved one;³ and

Whereas, a bill that would have increased the time for families to claim unclaimed persons before they become cadavers under the Maryland Anatomy Board from 72 hours to 2 weeks was rejected due to push back from funeral directors;³ and

Whereas, families express that they do not want their lack of funds or lack of timely notification to cause their loved ones to become property of the state;^{3,4,5} and

Whereas, the average cost of a funeral in Maryland is \$10,655 and 9.3% of people in Maryland and 16.6% of people in Baltimore live under the poverty line (\$24,860 for a family of four), making funerals prohibitively expensive for many families and preventing them from claiming their loved ones;^{4,6,7} and

Whereas, the Anatomy Board may waive its costs of burial under Section 5-406 upon a showing of hardship by a relative or friend of the unclaimed person and thus give them the opportunity to bury their loved one;⁸ and

Whereas, the International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA) has created ethics guidelines that require consent for donation in writing, which would prevent the use of unclaimed bodies;⁹ and

Whereas, the medical profession has a history of using unconsenting bodies to study anatomy and physiology, especially those of the poor and disadvantaged;¹⁰ and

Whereas, Maryland specifically has a long history of disproportionately using black bodies for study, leading to distrust of medical establishments in the community;¹¹ and

Whereas, the use of unconsenting bodies is deeply tied to slavery, racism, and dehumanization;^{9,10} and

Whereas, only 1.3% of the state of Maryland is registered to donate their body, making it statistically unlikely that an unclaimed individual would have consented to body donation;³ and

Whereas, the number of donated bodies in Maryland are increasing through a successful body donation program through which 80,000 individuals are registered to consensually donate their body, and thus the need for unclaimed bodies is decreasing;^{3,12} and

Whereas, there are approximately 1,000 bodies donated per year through the body donation program, while only approximately 400 are required for all uses in the state of Maryland;¹ and

Whereas, the required number of cadavers requested of the Anatomy Board has remained steady for many years, and cadavers above the quota are immediately cremated;¹ and

Whereas, the use of unclaimed bodies is considered by many to be ethically dubious;^{2,13,14} therefore be it

Resolved, That our MedChi advocate for policies that prohibit the Maryland State Anatomy Board's practice of using unclaimed bodies in medical education and research; and be it further

Resolved, That our MedChi should support policies that require the Maryland State Anatomy Board to obtain consent for all uses of cadavers and provide information to individuals and families about burial assistance programs.

As adopted by the House of Delegates at its meeting on April 28, 2019.

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