

Richard M. Cabot, MD Testimony: LD 210

Good afternoon Chairwomen Rotundo and Chairman Gattine and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Dr. Richard Cabot and I am a resident of Sangerville, Maine. The following testimony contained herein represents my own personal opinion as a state Medical Examiner

I come here today to give testimony in support of the current proposed budget initiatives of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME): LD210

It has been my honor and privilege to have served our local communities on two fronts over the past 37 years: as a practicing physician and most recently over the last 3 years as a Maine Medical Examiner. Although I am semi-retired, I still provide free medical consultation to local residents and provide our local fire departments with yearly no cost physical examinations. I currently serve on the following executive boards/committees. I am a Trustee of the Northern Light Mayo Hospital Board of Directors, a member of the Northern Light Health Systems Strategic Planning Committee, a member of the Maine Medical Association Committee on Physician Quality and the treasurer for the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County.

As I am sure you are all aware, the medical examiners office is one of the States most important agencies. By supplying death investigation with respect, integrity and professionalism, this cascades into directly supporting law enforcement, enhancing public health and safety and providing families, within the state, with compassionate closure regarding their loved ones.

As the CDC National Center for Health Statistics states:

“Public health relies on medical examiners and coroners for quality data about deaths they investigate including those that are sudden, unexpected, or unexplained. Medicolegal death investigations conducted by medical examiners and coroners are crucial to understanding causes of death, monitoring evolving health challenges, and – ultimately – saving lives.”

I have dealt on many occasions with the OCME office in Augusta. I can tell you without hesitation, that this is a group of professionals who are 100% dedicated to their job and are always knowledgeable and helpful in serving those of us in the field. As you may not be aware, The OCME relies on a large force of on site part time “volunteer” physician medical examiners (non-state employees) like me to conduct field examinations by gathering and documenting information regarding a death. During our examinations we are tasked to supply a number of observation and bodily samplings in examination of the decedent. Supplies like protective gloves and gowns and special instruments are crucial to a safe and complete examination. Unfortunately, the OCME is so underfunded that it becomes the responsibility of the field examiners to supply these needed materials at their own cost. This out of pocket cost coupled with the low reimbursement for the field

examiner will eventually effect recruitment and retention in maintaining a roster of quality field examiners. This would potentially have a devastating effect on the OCME to deliver quality timely reports and to secure sufficient numbers of examiners to complete the mission of the agency.

I believe that most of us sign up for medical examiner positions as a public service to our great State and its citizens. However, by increasing financial support for providing physician field examiners with needed crucial supplies and a modest increase in examiner exam fees this would help insure the viability and quality of the present OCME system. Without a large steady team of “volunteer” physician examiners, the structure of the current system could be in danger of not existing in its current form.

Please support the OCME proposed budget initiative: LD210. IT IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE AGENCY. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Richard. M. Cabot, MD