



OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

STATE OF MAINE
37 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0037

ocme@maine.gov

Telephone: (207) 624-7180
Fax: (207) 624-7178

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Liam Funte, MD, PhD
Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

Mark Flomenbaum, MD, PhD
Chief Medical Examiner

Senator Baldacci & Representative Meyer
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
131st Maine Legislature

RE: LD838: An Act to Identify the
State's Unidentified Human Remains

Hello. I am Lindsey Chasteen, Office Administrator for the Maine Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) here representing the office. We are neither for nor against this bill.

By statute (Title 22, Chap. 711), the OCME is the state clearinghouse for all of Maine's missing and unidentified people. All of Maine's missing and unidentified individuals are currently listed in the National Missing and Unidentified Person System (NamUs) by the OCME. These cases are revisited regularly in an attempt to make positive identification. That process may include re-running the fingerprints through the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) to see if new fingerprints have been uploaded into their system, or collecting an additional family reference sample to create a more robust DNA profile in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). Identification by DNA comparison cannot occur if there is nothing to compare the known sample to; that's where forensic genetic genealogy comes in.

The OCME currently has 27 cases of unidentified remains dating back to 1972. In the past five years, forensic genetic genealogy has been attempted on six (6) individuals, and it has produced a positive identification in two (2) of those cases. In 2018 an individual was positively identified after several months of research, and in 2022, Baby Jane Doe was positively identified after several years of research and additional targeted DNA testing.

The OCME policy states that every available method of identification must be utilized prior to releasing remains to their final disposition. These methods may include: visual (scars, marks, tattoos), dental, X-rays, fingerprints, or DNA. The OCME is currently finalizing a grant application that would provide funding for Maine's missing and unidentified person program.

We want nothing more than to identify all of these remains and return them to their families. However, the current OCME budget cannot bear the cost of having forensic genetic genealogy completed on all of

our open cases of unidentified remains. A fiscal note was submitted to the Office of Fiscal and Program Review (OFPR) for \$100,000 to start the testing, with an additional \$10-15,000 required annually. We ask that if this bill is approved, the fiscal note also be approved. The approval of the bill, without funding, will result in the OCME being unable to comply with statute.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsey Chasteen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsey Chasteen, MBA
Office Administrator