



OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

STATE OF MAINE

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Maine 132nd Legislature
Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for your time today. The Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is requesting a supplemental budget increase of \$52,195 to cover the increasing cost of toxicology testing, as evidenced on page A-8. In 2024, the Medical Examiner's Office had 2,008 toxicology tests run in 1,501 death investigations. Toxicology testing is vital in determining a cause of death, identifying contributing causes of death, and providing thorough answers to law enforcement and surviving family.

The current cost of a full postmortem toxicology test, which tests for over 200 substances (illicit, prescription, and alcohol) is \$220, after the agency discount of 47%. This is a 3.6% price increase over the previous year. Knowing a price increase could be expected, the Medical Examiner's Office has changed practice, and requests a lower priced postmortem toxicology test when it's possible, and the presiding forensic pathologist agrees. The lower priced testing, with a per test savings of \$41, only tests for 17 substances. This test may be requested when there are no concerns for drug misuse, but the forensic pathologist wants to verify that the most common illicit substances, and medication classifications are nothing to be concerned about.

Each year, the cost of testing increases. Even with discounted pricing for the most commonly requested tests, the OCME is spending over \$300,000 annually on testing. Price increases are to be expected in the scientific testing industry; usually attributable to the creation and implementation of more advanced testing methods, and the identification and development of testing methods for novel illicit substances.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Chasteen, MBA
Office Administrator