



OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn
Committee on Judiciary
132nd Maine Legislature

Re: LD 249

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the committee,

I am Lindsey Chasteen, the Office Administrator for the Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). I am speaking today on LD 249, An Act to Update Certain Medical Examiner Fees. The Medical Examiner's Office serves the entire State of Maine, and is located in Augusta. To conduct necessary death investigations across Maine in a timely manner, the expertise of licensed physicians (nonsalaried medical examiners) and industry personnel (nonsalaried medicolegal death investigators) is utilized. These individuals conduct external examinations and collect biological specimens used for toxicology testing, at the direction of the OCME.

The current pay structure consists of a flat fee for examinations (\$100), and additional fees depending on what biological sample may be requested from the OCME (blood, vitreous, urine, or muscle). The current fee was set in 2017 (formally the fee was \$85), and the additional fees could total \$80 depending on the type of death investigation. Per statute, the additional fees are set by the Chief Medical Examiner.

LD 249 looks to increase the flat fee for examinations to \$150, and eliminate the additional fees. This change will increase satisfaction among nonsalaried personnel, while improving retention of these individuals. Their experience in this work is invaluable, as they are the OCME's eyes and ears on the frontline of many death investigations and without personnel across the state, death investigation turnaround times would increase. Additionally, a more streamlined fee structure will decrease the time it takes to process nonsalaried personnel invoices as there would be one fee line, versus multiple lines for each specimen obtained.

The OCME recognizes the financial impact of this bill, and has submitted a budget initiative for \$76,000 to address the difference in examination fees, it is located in the Governor's Recommended Budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lindsey Chasteen, MBA
Office Administrator