

February 25, 2026

To: Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: Erik M. Hyatt, Director of Laboratory and Morgue Operations OCME

RE: Support for LD137 An Act to Expand the 1998 Special Retirement Plan to Include Employees Who Work for the Office of Chief Medical Examiner

Good Morning Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, the respected members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Erik Hyatt, and I am the Director of Laboratory and Morgue Operations at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, you may remember me from seeing me here before. I'm here to ask you to support LD 137 An Act to Expand the 1998 Special Retirement Plan to Include Employees Who Work for the Office of Chief Medical Examiner. I started this campaign for OCME's inclusion as a Medical Examiners Assistant on November 20th 2019.

2,291 days ago.

Since then, we've had 24,842 reports of death and every morning we have a meeting to listen to each report to make sure we've made the correct case decision as how we are going to proceed.

We've taken jurisdiction on 14,606 of those cases and gathered records, examined, reviewed and investigated them.

We have processed toxicology for further study on 8,939 cases.

Since that date we have had 2,680 individuals come through our doors in many different states of being, beautiful children, to individuals in a state of being that Mr. Stephen King could not imagine. Each one was treated with respect and care by the team.

789 of these cases had x-rays. Between Jan 2nd and Oct 25th 2025 we did 117 sets of X-rays, which equates to 348,000 pounds of weight moved by three (3) people. You think I'd be in better shape.

239 of those cases were homicides. One individual, or multiple individuals, killing another. Again, beautiful children to the aforementioned state of individuals. There are nine (9) Major crime units; two (2) city departments and investigators with the Attorney General's Office that investigate these homicides and receive special retirement. The Crime Lab that

processes the evidence we provide receives special retirement. Our staff see and touch every single one, and we do not.

We have responded to mass casualty events: Lewiston, the Bangor plane crash, the Maine Maritime crash. We've pulled decedents out of barrels, separated them from vehicles, tents, and furniture. We've walked through diesel-soaked woods recovering pieces from a plane crash. We deal with weapons left on or in bodies, maggots, crabs, bugs I can't name, fish, rodents, and even two (2) iguanas once upon a time, not to mention the smells, currently the whole office gets to deal with those.

Yes, we are getting a new office and H-vac. Yes, we are installing a Lodox to ease the x-ray process. Yes, we have additional staff to share the load. We are most grateful. The physical help will be enormous, and we thank you. But we have still listened to 24,842 death reports.

Every morning, we will listen to more reports, stories really, of the end of our fellow humans' lives. The Intake and Investigative teams will talk with law enforcement, hospital staff, funeral homes... mothers, fathers, siblings, children, in all states of mind, to get the story of the person so we have a complete investigative picture. They will upload scene pictures, console family, question law enforcement and medical professionals to get the story we will all sit and listen to the next day to figure out how we can best serve the dead, in order to serve the living.

It's how we choose to serve, but it's tiring, it's wearing. Since 11/20/2019 I have had three (3) therapists ask me to find someone else because they couldn't deal with the death we see every day.

Please, Please, fund LD 137. Let us make it to retirement with some of our own life left. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erik M. Hyatt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Erik" and last name "Hyatt" clearly distinguishable.

Erik M. Hyatt

Farmingdale