

6b - HB 977 - FIN - Postmortem Commission - LOSAA.

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STATE OF MARYLAND
POST MORTEM EXAMINERS COMMISSION
FORENSIC MEDICAL CENTER
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March 30, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 977 (3rd) – Department of Health – Office of the Chief Medical Examiner – Letter of Support as Amended

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members:

HB 977 renames the State Postmortem Examiners Commission to be the Postmortem Examiners Advisory Committee (“Committee”) and places powers previously performed by the Commission with the Maryland Department of Health (“Department”) and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (“Office”). The bill also requires the Secretary of the Department to consult with the Committee on matters related to the employment of the Chief Medical Examiner and prohibits the Department and the Committee from interfering with clinical findings and conclusions of the Office.

The Maryland State Postmortem Examiners Commission (the “Commission”) supports HB 977 as amended. This bill as introduced will allow for a more efficient process in handling human resources, budget, staffing, and operations of the Office. The bill reflects the reality that under the current law the Commission’s work requires the Department’s funding and allocation of resources. It streamlines processes by placing authority to implement all of the Commission’s former responsibilities including appointing authority for the chief medical examiner, deputy chiefs and assistant medical examiners; chief toxicologist; deputy chief, lead, and assistant toxicologists; serologist; forensic pathology residents; chief forensic investigator; deputy chiefs, lead, and assistant forensic investigators; autopsy services supervisor; and deputy, lead, and assistant autopsy technicians under the auspices of the Department.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. The Commission respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 977.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Commission’s Chair, Sanford Stass, M.D. at sstass@som.umaryland.edu and Vice Chair Ralph Hruban, M.D at rhruban@jhmi.edu.

The concerns of the Commission expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.

6a - HB 977 (3rd) - FIN - MDH - LOS.docx.pdf

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 30, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 977 (3rd) – Maryland Department of Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner - Letter of Support as Amended

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill (HB) 977 (3rd) - Maryland Department of Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. This bill will establish the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in the Maryland Department of Health, rename the State Postmortem Examiners Commission (PMEC) to be the Postmortem Examiners Advisory Committee, require and authorize the Department and the Office to perform certain duties and powers previously performed by the Commission, and authorize the Department to contract with a physician for employment with the Office on a per diem basis.

The bill's establishment of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) within MDH will make it clear that MDH is responsible and accountable for the administrative functions and operations of the OCME. Currently, the PMEC is charged with employing the staff and ensuring that the OCME has appropriate equipment; however, the budgetary, fiscal, human resources, and procurement functions are integrated into the work of those respective program offices within MDH. The change proposed by the bill will streamline the processes and also provide greater oversight responsibility and accountability for the operation of the OCME. MDH commits to maintaining close collaboration with the Postmortem Examiners Advisory Committee to provide support for OCME operations.

If you would like to discuss this topic further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

HB 977 Sponsor Testimony - Finance_.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseline Peña-Melnyk

Position: FWA

JOSELINE A. PEÑA-MELNYK

Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

—
Chair

Health and Government
Operations Committee

—

Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee

Legislative Policy Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates

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HB 977 Maryland Department of Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Testimony of Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk (Favorable with Amendments)

March 29, 2023

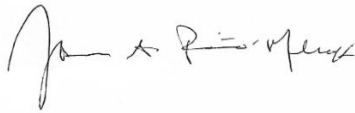
Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Ruth Getachew, and I am testifying on behalf of Delegate Peña-Melnyk. I am pleased to introduce House Bill 977, Maryland Department of Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Throughout this session, you have heard countless testimony on the workforce shortages that many agencies are experiencing, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is no different. When the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner was created years ago, responsibility was split between the Maryland Department of Health ('Department') and the State Postmortem Examiners Commission ('Commission'). Although many of the administrative responsibilities fall within the purview of the 'Department', the 'Commission' is tasked with employing staff and ensuring that the OCME has the appropriate equipment. Many of these processes such as the budgetary, fiscal, human resources, and procurement functions are integrated into the work of those respective program offices within the 'Department'. This bill aims to streamline those processes and provide greater oversight responsibility and accountability for the operation of the OCME.

This bill will also rename the 'Commission' to the Postmortem Examiners Advisory Committee. There are two amendments to the bill. The first clarifies language that the 'Department', not the 'Commission', is responsible for ensuring that the number of staff does not

fall to a level that would constitute a Phase II violation according to the National Association of Medical Examiners. The second amendment changes the sponsorship of the legislation. The OCME needs our support! This bill has passed unanimously out of the House with support from all involved parties. We need your help to get this important legislation over the finish line. Thank you all for the opportunity to present House Bill 977, and I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk