

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

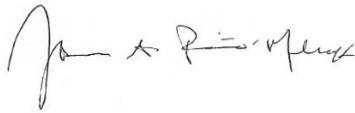
Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Ruth Getachew, and I am testifying on behalf of Delegate Peña-Melnyk. I am pleased to introduce House Bill 977, Maryland Department of Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

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