



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: HB 934 - Public Health – Chief Medical Examiner – Autopsy Findings and Conclusions-
Letter of Information

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is submitting this letter of information for House Bill 934 (HB 934) – Chief Medical Examiner – Autopsy Findings and Conclusions. HB 934 would allow a person of interest to appeal the manner of death to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). Although a case that is determined to be a homicide cannot be appealed to OAH, this bill allows non-homicide cases to be converted to a homicide. If the manner of death in “non-homicide” cases is changed to “homicide”, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), law enforcement and State’s Attorneys will be obligated to re-investigate cases in which homicide had previously been ruled out. Furthermore, OCME would be obligated to testify at OAH and exhume any decedent that has not been cremated.

The OCME estimates that the overall cost to re-investigate a case where the manner of death is amended to homicide is \$19,300 per case. The OCME investigates approximately 500 suicides each year, which are the manner of death most often contended and requested to be reclassified as a homicide. The potential total fiscal impact based on these assumptions is \$9,650,000 per year for the re-investigation only.

MDH is providing this letter of information to address the impact of the legislation. I hope this information is useful. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me at (410) 260-3190 or Webster.ye@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Webster Ye
Assistant Secretary, Health Policy