

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER**  
11 Shuttle Rd., Farmington, CT 06032-1939  
Telephone: (860) 679-3980 Fax: (860) 679-1257



February 20, 2009

TO: Senator Toni Nathaniel Harp, Representative John Geragosian  
And Honored Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: H. Wayne Carver II, MD, Chief Medical Examiner

SUBJ: **Appropriations Committee Hearing – FY2010- FY2011 Biennium Budget**

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is charged with the investigation of undocumented, suspicious and sudden or violent deaths in a timely and accurate manner. In order to do this, we are required to investigate, to various degrees, over 57% of the deaths in Connecticut. This amounted to a total of 16,617 cases for the fiscal year which ended on June 30, 2008. The reports of these investigations and the expert testimony of the staff Medical Examiners are used in a wide variety of forums including the proper adjudication of criminal matters and the resolution of civil litigation including torts, probate and the execution of insurance contracts.

The information developed by the Office protects the public health by diagnosing previously unsuspected contagious diseases, identifying hazardous environmental conditions (including deaths due to bio-terrorism), and identifying new types and forms of drugs that appear in the state. The Office also plays a critical role in child abuse cases, not only in fatalities but also increasingly in non-fatal cases as well. It also plays a key role in the committees formulated to conduct research on violent deaths in Connecticut.

I am pleased to report that the legislature has been supportive of our agency over the years by allowing us to augment our investigations unit to replace the deteriorating Assistant Medical Examiner (AME) system previously in place. Virtually all these physicians in the field are retired and in their 80 and 90s. Because the practice of medicine has changed so dramatically coupled with the low per case state reimbursement, there is no interest by outside physicians to serve as an AME. As a result, the agency has been obligated to reallocate funding to hire in house staff who are trained and knowledgeable in the area of forensic science.

While the state continues to face financially challenging times, it is our hope that the office will be able to continue to provide the services to families, treating physicians, law enforcement personnel and others that this great state is accustomed to and deserves. A critical component is having adequate staffing levels to meet the demands for services, which will increase as more and more CT residents are faced with layoffs and other financial hardships. At present, the agency is facing a catastrophic situation in terms of long term continuity of professional staffing if anticipated retirements become a reality. We are currently in an enviable position of having achieved dual accreditation thru the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) and the American Board of Forensic Toxicologists (ABFT). Failure to maintain adequate staffing levels will jeopardize these accreditations and will cause the agency to deteriorate as other Medical Examiner's Offices have in our neighboring states.

We look forward to working closely with each of you in the coming weeks and again appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee.