

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

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March 3, 2015

TO: Senator Beth Bye, Representative Toni E. Walker, Co-Chairman
And Honored Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: James R. Gill, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner

SUBJ: FY2016-FY2017 Biennium Budget

Thank you for your support of our office and for giving me the opportunity to describe our current financial status. I will briefly explain how our increasing workload may affect our future budget.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is charged with the investigation of all suspicious, unexpected, and violent deaths. **This must be done accurately and in a timely fashion.** The information developed by the Office protects the public health and safety by diagnosing previously unsuspected contagious disease, identifying hazardous environmental conditions, new types and forms of drugs that appear in the state, and providing follow-up to medical care providers. The reports of these investigations and the expert testimony of the staff Medical Examiners are used in the proper adjudication of criminal matters and the resolution of civil litigation including torts, probate, and the execution of insurance contracts.

In order to accomplish this work, we are required to investigate, to various degrees, over 50% of the deaths in Connecticut. During calendar year 2014, this amounted to 19,626 deaths (an increase of 2.7% from 2013 and a 12.5% increase since 2010). In addition, in the past year alone, the number of autopsies increased from 1452 to 1702 (>17% increase). Our Office is fully accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME). In order to maintain this accreditation, our staff must each perform fewer than 250 autopsies per year and 90% of our reports must be completed within 60 days. If our investigations continue to increase, additional staffing will be needed to fulfill our duties including an 8th medical examiner. Otherwise, transportation of decedents from homes, autopsies, and reports will be delayed which in-turn will delay funeral homes and families from proceeding with their arrangements and receiving life insurance benefits.

Of the above deaths in 2014, 15,464 cremation certificates were issued (4.5% increase from 2013 and a 20.8% increase since 2010). It is important to note that the fee charged to issue the cremation certificate generates approximately two million dollars in revenue to the General Fund.

I am pleased to report that substantial progress has been made during this past year. Specifically, we have solved the toxicology backlog, recruited two new staff physicians, and have started, with the assistance of the Department of Administrative Services and the Office of Policy & Management, to restore the administrative management functions. We are hopeful that all the support staffing will be in place so that we can resume transacting HR/Payroll & Business operations in CORE-CT not later than the beginning of FY16.

Thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to working closely with the sub-Committee in the coming weeks.