

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[Third Reprint]

SENATE, No. 976

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 218th LEGISLATURE

DATED: JUNE 26, 2018

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** "Revised State Medical Examiner Act"; establishes Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner in DOH.
- Types of Impact:** Annual State and county expenditure increases.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of Health; Department of Law and Public Safety; Counties.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	Annual
State Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
County Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that this bill will increase the annual State and county operating expenditures for the Statewide medical examiner system. The magnitude of the expenditure increases will depend on operating and regulatory decisions by the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner and operating decisions by county and intercounty medical examiner offices, all of which the OLS cannot anticipate without information from concerned agencies.
- The expenditure increases will result from the bill's expansion of the responsibilities of the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner and the compliance by the entire Statewide medical examiner system with new requirements, standards, and guidelines established by either the bill or the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner in the implementation thereof.

BILL DESCRIPTION

The bill, designated as the "Revised State Medical Examiner Act," reforms the State's medical examiner system.

The bill maintains the system's current organizational structure in that a State medical examiner office oversees several independently-operated county and intercounty medical examiner offices. The bill, however, abolishes the existing Office of the State Medical Examiner in the Department of Law and Public Safety and transfers all of its functions, powers, and duties to the new Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner in, but not of, the Department of Health.

The bill also makes numerous revisions to the responsibilities of State, county, and intercounty medical examiner offices; including modifications to standard operating protocols, an expansion of the categories of deaths that require a medicolegal investigation, the strengthening of the oversight function of the State office vis-à-vis the county and intercounty offices, the establishment of research and oversight boards within the State office, and the issuance of an annual report by the State office on the performance of the Statewide system.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS estimates that this bill will increase the annual State and county operating expenditures for the Statewide medical examiner system. The magnitude of the expenditure increases will depend on operating and regulatory decisions by the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner and operating decisions by county and intercounty medical examiner offices, all of which the OLS cannot anticipate without information from concerned agencies.

The expenditure increases will result from the bill's expansion of the responsibilities of the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner and the compliance by the entire Statewide medical examiner system with new requirements, standards, and guidelines established by either the bill or the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner in the implementation thereof. For instance, this bill expands the categories of deaths that require a medicolegal investigation, establishes research and oversight boards within the State office, and requires the State office to issue an annual report on the performance of the Statewide medical examiner system.

Currently, the State Medical Examiner oversees the Office of the State Medical Examiner and two regional medical examiner facilities. The State's two regional offices manage the medical examiner duties for seven of the State's 21 counties. However, nine additional county and intercounty medical examiner offices, which are generally independent of the Office of the State Medical Examiner, are responsible for the State's remaining 14 counties.

The Office of the State Medical Examiner operates with a \$438,000 State appropriation in FY 2018 as well as \$11.8 million in anticipated dedicated revenue collections. Seven counties currently use the office's State Toxicology Lab, which also performs law enforcement drug tests. According to performance evaluation data in the Governor's FY 2018 Budget Recommendation, 6,757 deaths were investigated and 1,773 autopsies were performed throughout the State's medical examiner system in FY 2016.

Section: Human Services

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This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).