



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

For Immediate Release

April 18, 2024

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) applauds the efforts of Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT), Representative Michael Guest (MS-03), and Representative Emanuel Cleaver (MO-05) in introducing the Strengthening the Medical Examiner and Coroner System Act of 2024. This legislation is one of the most important pieces of legislation ever introduced to support United States forensic pathologists and medicolegal death investigators. CFSO expresses appreciation to these senators and representatives for recognizing the critical needs of forensic science medical practitioners, death investigators, medical examiners, and coroners.

This bill addresses a critical shortage of board-certified forensic pathologists, qualified and certified medicolegal death investigators, and certified forensic toxicologists and pharmacologists that support medical examiner and coroner offices. The United States needs approximate 1,800 full-time forensic pathologists to meet current needs throughout the country, an increase of over 1,000 of these medical doctor specialists. This equates to a national emergency as forensic pathologists play a critical role in supporting our nation's public health, public safety, and criminal justice systems. They also provide critical information to the families of decedents and their attending physicians. The shortage of trained and certified medicolegal death investigators is also problematic as they play a vital role in proper investigations and appropriate resolutions of death investigations in local jurisdictions.

“Medicolegal death investigations conducted by medical examiners and coroners are a crucial part of our public health system. They are necessary to determine causes and manners of death, monitor evolving health challenges, and potentially save lives. Staff shortages result in autopsies being delayed or not being performed which results in delayed death certification and report completion by months. These delays negatively impact epidemiological death data, prevent families from gaining closure, and hamstring our ability to fight the opioid epidemic and other future emerging health crisis,” said Dr. James Gill, Connecticut Chief Medical Examiner and CFSO Board Member representing the National Association of Medical Examiners.

Bobbi Jo O’Neal, Charleston County South Carolina Coroner and CFSO Board Member representing the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners stated, “This legislation will support and encourage qualified medical graduates to enter the practice of forensic pathology and educate, train, and certify qualified individuals to enter the field of medicolegal death investigation. Increasing the number of board-certified forensic pathologists and medicolegal death investigators must be a top priority to ensure that the United States can address current and emerging death issues and be prepared for crisis situations such as natural disasters and global pandemics.”

Dr. Tim Rohrig, CFSO Board Member representing the Society of Forensic Toxicologists and American Board of Forensic Toxicology, stated, “The support in this bill for forensic toxicology laboratories who support forensic medicolegal death investigation service providers is essential to ensure accurate and reliable forensic toxicology is performed and forensic pharmacological/toxicological consulting and testimony is available to coroners, medical examiners, and officers of the court. Forensic toxicology and pharmacology each provide vital information to investigations, cause and manner of death determinations, and court proceedings.”

For over 24 years, the CFSO has represented over 21,000 forensic science practitioners and forensic medicine practitioners. Speaking with a single forensic science voice on matters of mutual interest to its member organizations, CFSO’s mission is to educate public policymakers at the state, local, and national levels on matters of importance to the nation’s crime labs, medical examiners, coroners, toxicologists, and the public.

Press Contact---Matthew Gamette, CFSO Chair matthew.gamette@thecfso.org
Dr. James Gill, CFSO Representative for NAME james.gill@thecfso.org
Bobbi Jo O’Neal, CFSO Representative for IACME bobbijooneal@thecfso.org