



The National Association of Medical Examiners®

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March 5, 2025

Re: Opposition to House Bill 2845

Dear Legislators,

As the President of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), I am writing to express our organization's strong opposition to proposed amendment to HB 2845, that would require the term "Controlled Substance Overdose" to be used on a death certificate in cases where a controlled substance other than those listed in Penalty Group 1-B is present in the body of a decedent in an amount that is considered to be lethal by "generally accepted scientific standards."

Death certification is the practice of medicine and, as such, should not be statutorily dictated. The death certificate is a medical opinion that should not be forced upon the certifier. Physicians must be free to make and certify medical diagnoses to the best of their knowledge using their medical expertise.

Lethality of concentration of a drug cannot be determined in isolation. Whether the drug involved be fentanyl, methamphetamine, oxycodone, or cocaine, the toxicology results must be assessed in context. The phrase "...in an amount or concentration that is considered lethal by generally accepted scientific standards," forces the forensic pathologist to determine manner of death based on a test result alone rather than within the complete context of the autopsy findings and scene investigation, thereby causing threats of inaccuracy in individual diagnosis and public health reporting.

On June 10, 2024, the American Medical Association passed Resolution 708, which states:

"...RESOLVED, that our American Medical Association supports the independent authority of physicians to provide accurate and transparent postmortem assessments and death investigation reporting in a manner free from undue influence (New HOD Policy); and be it further

RESOLVED, that our AMA advocate with state and federal governments to ensure laws and regulations do not compromise a physician's ability to use their medical judgement in the reporting of postmortem assessments and medicolegal death investigations. (Directive to Take Action)"

In conclusion, NAME strongly opposes HB 2845 and any legislation that would compel a certifier to use a particular phrase like "Controlled Substance Overdose" on a death certificate.

Sincerely,

Reade Quinton, M.D.
NAME 2025 President