



OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
Eric Konnick, MD, MS

VICE PRESIDENT
Cigdem Ussakli, MD

SECRETARY
Elizabeth Parker, MD

TREASURER
Mohiedean Ghofrani, MD

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Suzanne Dintzis, MD, PhD

MEMBERS AT LARGE
Dominique Coco, MD
Yuxin Lu, MD
Rohit Singh, MD
Funda Vakar-Lopez, MD

RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
Crane Wu, MD
Leo Yermakov, MD

February 6, 2023

Honorable Emily Randall
Chair, Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
215 John A. Cherberg Building
P.O. Box 40426
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Support Senate Bill 5523 (Addressing the Forensic Pathologist Shortage)

Dear Chairwoman Randall:

On behalf of the Washington State Society of Pathologists (WSSP), I am writing in support of the above referenced legislation. The WSSP is a state medical society representing many practicing pathologists in the State of Washington who practice clinical and anatomic pathology.

SB 5523 importantly brings attention to the shortage of forensic pathologists in our state, a problem that has grown worse over the last decade. As you know, forensic pathologists are highly trained medical doctors who specialize in death investigation and autopsy services. Using forensic pathologists in our coroners' offices ensures that certification of death is accomplished by highly trained medical professionals who can integrate autopsy findings with information from the crime scene and the laboratory. These professionals have core competencies in assessing immediate and earlier medical history, interviewing witnesses, and physical examination.

Unfortunately, forensic pathologists have become busier and busier across the country. This stems from two trends: More death investigations as the result not only of additional deaths related to the pandemic but also an upward trajectory of homicides, overdoses and even traffic-related fatalities. At the same time, the country is simply not training enough forensic pathologists to keep up with the workload.

It is vital that we enact policies that helps attract physicians in training to the field of forensic pathology. We applaud your efforts in presenting this loan forgiveness program as one of the policies to bolster the ranks of forensic pathologists in Washington State and also support the proposed study. While there is much more policy work that needs to be done, we feel that this legislation will be a helpful part of the solution.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments in support of SB 5523.

Sincerely,

Dominique P. Coco, MD
On behalf of Washington State Society of Pathologists

Washington State Society of Pathologists