

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

## SENATE BILL

No. 1037 Session of  
2022

INTRODUCED BY REGAN, GORDNER, J. WARD, MENSCH, BAKER, PHILLIPS-  
HILL, HUTCHINSON, BARTOLOTTA, MASTRIANO, YAW, MARTIN,  
SCAVELLO AND FLYNN, JANUARY 25, 2022

SENATOR REGAN, LAW AND JUSTICE, AS AMENDED, APRIL 5, 2022

## AN ACT

1 Amending Title 44 (Law and Justice) of the Pennsylvania  
2 Consolidated Statutes, in other officers and officials,  
3 providing for coroners; and making a related repeal.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Title 44 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated  
7 Statutes is amended by adding a chapter to read:

8 CHAPTER 75

9 CORONERS

10 Subchapter

11 A. General Provisions (Reserved)

12 B. (Reserved)

13 C. Coroners' Education and Training

14 SUBCHAPTER A

15 GENERAL PROVISIONS

16 (RESERVED)

17 SUBCHAPTER B

18 (RESERVED)

1                                    SUBCHAPTER C

2                                    CORONERS' EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3    Sec.

4    7521. Scope of subchapter.

5    7522. Definitions.

6    7523. Coroners' Education and Training Board.

7    7524. Powers and duties of board.

8    7525. Education and training program.

9    7526. Continuing education.

10   7527. Coroner training requirements.

11   7528. Chief deputy coroner, deputy coroner or other individual

12                    performing death investigations training

13                    requirements.

14   7529. Continuing education requirements.

15   7530. Home rule counties.

16   7531. Revocation of certification.

17   7532. Coroners' Education and Training Account.

18   § 7521. Scope of subchapter.

19    This subchapter provides for the education and training for  
20   county coroners, chief deputy coroners, deputy coroners and  
21   other individuals performing death investigations and for the  
22   Coroners' Education and Training Account.

23   § 7522. Definitions.

24    The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter  
25   shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
26   context clearly indicates otherwise:

27    "Account." The Coroners' Education and Training Account  
28   established under section 7532 (relating to Coroners' Education  
29   and Training Account).

30    "Association." The Pennsylvania State Coroners Association.

1 "Board." The Coroners' Education and Training Board.

2 "Commission." The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and  
3 Delinquency.

4 "Program." The Coroners' Education and Training Program  
5 established under the provisions of this subchapter.

6 § 7523. Coroners' Education and Training Board.

7 (a) Establishment.--The Coroners' Education and Training  
8 Board is established within the commission.

9 (b) Composition.--The board shall be composed as follows:

10 (1) The Executive Director of the commission or a  
11 designee.

12 (2) Five coroners from different areas of this  
13 Commonwealth, each with a minimum of six years' experience as  
14 a coroner.

15 (3) A physician coroner or other licensed health care  
16 professional coroner with a minimum of six years' experience  
17 as a coroner.

18 (4) A board-certified forensic pathologist with a  
19 minimum of four years' experience as a forensic pathologist.

20 (5) Two other forensic experts with a minimum of four  
21 years' experience in death investigations and experience as a  
22 toxicologist, an odontologist, an anthropologist or an  
23 entomologist.

24 (6) One educator qualified in the field of criminal  
25 justice.

26 (7) One county district attorney.

27 (8) The Executive Director of the association, who shall  
28 serve as an ex officio member.

29 (c) Appointments and terms.--All members of the board,  
30 except for the executive directors of the commission and the

1 association, shall be appointed as follows:

2 (1) ~~Of the five coroners, two shall be appointed by the~~ <--  
3 ~~President pro tempore of the Senate, two shall be appointed~~  
4 ~~by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one shall~~  
5 ~~be appointed by the Governor, all from a list of 10 qualified~~  
6 ~~persons recommended by the Pennsylvania Coroners'~~  
7 ~~Association.~~ ONE CORONER SHALL BE APPOINTED BY EACH OF THE <--  
8 FOLLOWING FROM A LIST OF 10 QUALIFIED PERSONS RECOMMENDED BY  
9 THE PENNSYLVANIA CORONERS' ASSOCIATION:

10 (I) THE GOVERNOR.

11 (II) THE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE.

12 (III) THE MINORITY LEADER OF THE SENATE.

13 (IV) THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

14 (V) THE MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF

15 REPRESENTATIVES.

16 (2) The physician coroner or other licensed health care  
17 professional coroner shall be appointed by the Governor from  
18 a list of three qualified persons recommended by the  
19 Pennsylvania Coroners' Association.

20 (3) The board-certified forensic pathologist shall be  
21 appointed by the Governor from a list of three qualified  
22 persons recommended by the Pennsylvania Coroners'  
23 Association.

24 (4) Of the other two forensic experts, one shall be  
25 appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate and one  
26 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
27 Representatives from a list of five qualified persons  
28 recommended by the Pennsylvania Coroners' Association.

29 (5) One educator qualified in the field of criminal  
30 justice shall be appointed by the Governor.

1       (6) One county district attorney shall be appointed by  
2       the Governor.

3       (d) Vacancies.--A member appointed to fill a vacancy created  
4       by any reason other than expiration of a term shall be appointed  
5       for the unexpired term of the member who the appointee succeeds  
6       in the same manner as the original appointment.

7       (e) Expenses.--The members of the board shall serve without  
8       compensation but shall be reimbursed the necessary and actual  
9       expenses incurred in attending the meetings of the board and in  
10       the performance of their duties under this subchapter.

11       (f) Removal.--Members of the board, except the executive  
12       directors of the commission and the association, may be removed  
13       by the Governor for good cause shown upon written notice from  
14       the Governor specifically stating the cause for removal.

15       (g) Chair.--The members of the board shall select a chair  
16       from among the members to serve for a period of one year. A  
17       chair may be elected to serve successive terms.

18       (h) Meetings.--The board shall meet bimonthly in person or  
19       via video or conference call. Special meetings may be called by  
20       the chair of the board or upon written request of a majority of  
21       members. Special meeting notices shall be provided two days in  
22       advance and contain the agenda items to be discussed at the  
23       special meeting.

24       (i) Quorum.--A quorum is required at all meetings in order  
25       for votes to be taken. A simple majority of members present  
26       shall constitute a quorum.

27       § 7524. Powers and duties of board.

28       The board may consult with the commission on any matters it  
29       deems necessary or appropriate. The powers and duties of the  
30       board shall be to:

1       (1) Establish, implement and administer the Coroners'  
2       Education and Training Program for county coroners, chief  
3       deputy coroners, deputy coroners and any other individuals  
4       performing death investigations, regardless of job title and  
5       regardless of whether they are a full-time employee, part-  
6       time employee or per diem employee.

7       (2) Establish, implement and administer a continuing  
8       education program for county coroners, chief deputy coroners,  
9       deputy coroners and any other individuals performing death  
10       investigations, regardless of job title and regardless of  
11       whether they are a full-time employee, part-time employee or  
12       per diem employee. In doing so, the board shall determine  
13       which courses, seminars, lectures and meetings qualify for  
14       credit hours and the number of credits to be given to each.

15       (3) Establish the minimum qualifications for instructors  
16       and certify instructors.

17       (4) Approve or revoke the approval of any school or  
18       entity that may be utilized to comply with the educational  
19       and training requirements of this subchapter.

20       (5) Establish the tuition to be charged for the course  
21       of instruction that shall be as nearly equal to the cost of  
22       administering the course and the written examination,  
23       including instruction materials, instructor fees, lodging and  
24       meals.

25       (6) Certify county coroners, chief deputy coroners,  
26       deputy coroners and any other individuals performing death  
27       investigations, regardless of job title and regardless of  
28       whether they are a full-time employee, part-time employee or  
29       per diem employee, who have satisfactorily completed the  
30       basic education and training requirements of this subchapter

1 and issue appropriate certificates to them.

2 (7) Revoke the certification of county coroners, chief  
3 deputy coroners, deputy coroners and any other individuals  
4 performing death investigations, regardless of job title and  
5 regardless of whether they are a full-time employee, part-  
6 time employee or per diem employee in accordance with section  
7 7531 (relating to revocation of certification).

8 (8) Reinstate previously revoked certifications of  
9 county coroners, chief deputy coroners, deputy coroners and  
10 any other individuals performing death investigations,  
11 regardless of job title and regardless of whether they are a  
12 full-time employee, part-time employee or per diem employee  
13 if the board finds that the circumstances which led to the  
14 revocation of certification are no longer an impediment to  
15 certification.

16 (9) Make rules and regulations and perform other duties  
17 as may reasonably be necessary or appropriate to administer  
18 this subchapter.

19 (10) Make an annual report to the Governor and to the  
20 General Assembly concerning:

21 (i) The administration of the Coroners' Education  
22 and Training Program.

23 (ii) The activities of the board.

24 (iii) The costs of the program.

25 § 7525. Education and training program.

26 The Coroners' Education and Training Program shall be no less  
27 than 40 hours of instruction and a final examination. The  
28 program shall include subjects such as death scene  
29 investigation, crime scene processing, toxicology, preservation  
30 of evidence, forensic autopsies, child abuse deaths, elder abuse

deaths, pandemic needs and responses, office management,  
including forms and reports to be implemented, and the legal  
duties of the office of coroner.

§ 7526. Continuing education.

The continuing education program shall require no less than  
12 hours of continuing education annually. No more than four  
hours may be completed online. Continuing education requirements  
may be obtained in conjunction with the annual conference of the  
association. The board may increase the required course hours if  
it is determined that an increase is necessary to maintain  
current knowledge in the operations of the coroner and shall  
provide notice of the increase one year prior to the effective  
date of the new requirements.

§ 7527. Coroner training requirements.

(a) Course of instruction and written examination.--

(1) Except as provided under paragraph (2) and  
subsection (c), an individual elected or appointed for the  
first time to the office of coroner on or after the effective  
date of this paragraph shall complete, prior to being sworn  
into the office, the required course of instruction and shall  
successfully pass the final examination with a score of no  
less than 80%.

(2) The board may postpone the requirements under  
paragraph (1) upon a showing of just cause.

(b) Noncompliance.--If the individual elected or appointed  
to the office of coroner fails to comply with the requirements  
under subsection (a) without just cause, the individual shall  
not be eligible to take the oath of office and the office of  
coroner shall be deemed vacant. The vacancy shall be filled in  
accordance with the laws of this Commonwealth.



1     (c) Vacancy.--In the event of a vacancy in the office of  
2 coroner, the individual appointed to fill the vacancy shall  
3 complete the next available course of instruction and  
4 successfully pass the written examination with a score of not  
5 less than 80%. In the event the individual appointed to fill a  
6 vacancy in the office of coroner is currently a medicolegal  
7 death investigator within the office who has previously  
8 completed the course and successfully passed the examination and  
9 has maintained any continuing education requirements, the  
10 appointee shall not be required to participate in an additional  
11 course and written examination.

12 § 7528. Chief deputy coroner, deputy coroner or other  
13 individual performing death investigations training  
14 requirements.

15 (a) Course of instruction and written examination.--

16 (1) Except as provided under paragraph (2), an  
17 individual appointed on or after the effective date of this  
18 paragraph to the position of chief deputy coroner, deputy  
19 coroner or as an individual performing death investigations  
20 shall, within one year, complete the required course of  
21 instruction and pass the final examination with a score of no  
22 less than 80%.

23 (2) The board may postpone the completion requirement  
24 under paragraph (1) upon a showing of just cause.

25 (3) The board may establish rules to apply to per diem  
26 death investigators, as long as those rules do not eliminate  
27 any of the course requirements and a successful passing score  
28 of not less than 80%.

29 (b) Noncompliance.--If the appointed individual fails to  
30 comply with the requirements under subsection (a) without just

1 cause, a vacancy shall be deemed to exist in that position and  
2 the vacancy shall be filled in accordance with the manner of the  
3 original appointment.

4 § 7529. Continuing education requirements.

5 (a) Requirement.--Each year, every coroner, chief deputy  
6 coroner, deputy coroner and any other individual performing  
7 death investigations, regardless of job title and regardless of  
8 whether they are a full-time employee, part-time employee or per  
9 diem employee, shall, while in office, meet the requirements for  
10 continuing education established by the board.

11 (b) National certification.--As part of the continuing  
12 education requirements for a coroner or chief deputy coroner,  
13 each coroner and chief deputy coroner shall attain national  
14 medicolegal death investigation certification through the  
15 American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators within two  
16 years of taking office and shall maintain the number of hours of  
17 continuing education required to maintain national  
18 certification.

19 § 7530. Home rule counties.

20 In the case of a county which has adopted a home rule charter  
21 which provides for the appointment of the coroner, a coroner  
22 appointed after the effective date of this section shall obtain  
23 certification within six months of appointment and fulfill  
24 continuing education requirements as required under this  
25 subchapter.

26 § 7531. Revocation of certification.

27 (a) Revocation of chief deputy coroner, deputy coroner and  
28 any other individual performing death investigations  
29 certification.--The board shall revoke the certification of any  
30 chief deputy coroner, deputy coroner and any other individual

performing death investigations for one or more of the  
following:

(1) Conviction for a felony or misdemeanor of the first  
degree or second degree.

(2) If the board determines the individual was dismissed  
for cause from employment as a chief deputy coroner, deputy  
coroner and any other individual performing death  
investigations regardless of job title.

(3) If the board determines the individual is physically  
or psychologically unfit to perform the duties of the office.

(4) If the board determines the individual has committed  
misconduct which makes the person unfit to perform the duties  
of the office, including:

(i) Submission to the board of a document that the  
individual knows contains false information, including a  
fraudulent application.

(ii) Cheating on board examinations or skills tests.

(b) Revocation of coroner certification.--The board shall  
revoke the certification of a coroner only after the coroner is  
removed from office. Nothing in this subchapter shall be  
interpreted as providing grounds for removal of a coroner from  
office, except as provided for by Article VI of the Constitution  
of Pennsylvania.

(c) Notification by coroner.--In the case of any chief  
deputy coroner, deputy coroner and any other individual  
performing death investigations regardless of job title, it  
shall be the responsibility of the coroner to notify the board  
within 15 days of the occurrence of an event described under  
subsection (a).

(d) Notification by county commissioners.--In the case of a

1 coroner, it shall be the responsibility of the county  
2 commissioners to notify the board within 15 days of a coroner's  
3 removal from office.

4 (e) Regulations.--The board shall establish regulations  
5 providing for the following:

6 (1) Notice of a revocation and the right of coroners,  
7 any chief deputy coroner, deputy coroner and any other  
8 individual performing death investigations regardless of job  
9 title to request a hearing.

10 (2) Standards and guidelines for application for  
11 recertification following revocation.

12 § 7532. Coroners' Education and Training Account.

13 (a) Establishment.--The Coroners' Education and Training  
14 Account is established as a special restricted account within  
15 the General Fund. Money in the account is appropriated on a  
16 continuing basis to the commission for the purpose of financing  
17 education and training expenses, the costs of administering the  
18 program, reimbursements to counties and all other costs  
19 associated with the activities of the board and the  
20 implementation of this subchapter.

21 (b) Fee.--Two dollars from the fee for each death  
22 certificate issued shall be deposited into the account.

23 (c) Disbursements.--Disbursements from the account shall be  
24 made by the commission.

25 (d) Reimbursement to counties.--Each county shall pay the  
26 ordinary and necessary living and travel expenses and the  
27 regular wages and per diem of each coroner, chief deputy  
28 coroner, deputy coroner and any other individual that performs  
29 death investigations while attending approved courses. The  
30 commission shall reimburse each county 100% of the stated

expenses incurred by each coroner, chief deputy coroner, deputy coroner and any other individual that performs death investigations while attending the basic education and training course, the national medicolegal death investigation certification course and continuing education courses. The commission shall provide for 100% of the tuition incurred while attending basic education and training, national medicolegal death investigation certification training and continuing education.

Section 2. Repeals are as follows:

(1) The General Assembly declares that the repeal under paragraph (2) is necessary to effectuate the addition of 44 Pa.C.S. Ch. 75.

(2) The act of March 2, 1988 (P.L.108, No.22), referred to as the Coroners' Education Board Law, is repealed.

Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.