INTRODUCED BY J. WARD, REGAN, MASTRIANO, PHILLIPS-HILL, SANTARSIERO, MENSCH, BROOKS, YAW, ARNOLD, LANGERHOLC, ARGALL, BAKER, STEFANO, PITTMAN, K. WARD, AUMENT AND DINNERMAN, MAY 25, 2020

REFERRED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MAY 25, 2020

AN ACT

Amending the act of August 9, 1955 (P.L.323, No.130), entitled "An act relating to counties of the first, second class A, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth classes; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the laws relating thereto; relating to imposition of excise taxes by counties, including authorizing imposition of an excise tax on the rental of motor vehicles by counties of the first class; and providing for regional renaissance initiatives," in coroner, further providing for coroner's investigation.

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

Section 1. Section 1218-B of the act of August 9, 1955 (P.L.323, No.130), known as The County Code, is amended to read:

Section 1218-B. Coroner's investigation.

(a) Duty.--The coroner having a view of the body following circumstances of death which shall be reported by persons having actual knowledge of the death, including a health care facility, personal care home or physician to the coroner, who shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning a death that appears to have happened within the county, notwithstanding
where the cause of the death may have occurred, for the purpose
of determining whether or not an autopsy or inquest should be
carried out in the following cases:

(1) A sudden death not caused by a readily recognizable
disease or, if the cause of death cannot be properly
certified, by a physician on the basis of prior recent
medical attendance.

(2) A death occurring under suspicious circumstances,
including if alcohol, a drug or another toxic substance may
have had a direct bearing on the outcome.

(3) A death occurring as a result of violence or trauma,
whether apparently homicidal, suicidal or accidental,
including, but not limited to, a death due to mechanical,
thermal, chemical, electrical or radiational injury,
drowning, cave-in or subsidence.

(4) A death in which trauma, chemical injury, drug
overdose or reaction to a drug or medication or medical
treatment was a primary or secondary, direct or indirect,
contributory, aggravating or precipitating cause of death.

(5) A perioperative death in which the death is not
readily explainable on the basis of prior disease.

(6) A death in which the body is unidentified or
unclaimed.

(7) A death known or suspected to be due to contagious
disease, including any disease constituting a health disaster
emergency or pandemic, and constituting a public hazard.

(8) A death occurring in prison or a penal institution
or while in the custody of the police.

(9) A death of an individual whose body is to be
cremated, buried at sea or otherwise disposed of so as to be
unavailable for examination thereafter.

(10) A sudden and unexplained infant death.

(11) A stillbirth.

(b) Purpose.--The purpose of an investigation under subsection (a) shall be to determine:

(1) The cause and manner of the death.

(2) Whether or not there is sufficient reason for the coroner to believe that the death may have resulted from a criminal act or criminal neglect of a person other than the deceased.

(c) Requirements.--As part of an investigation under subsection (a), the coroner shall determine the identity of the deceased and notify the next of kin of the deceased.

(d) Data.--Where it is determined by the coroner of the county of death or residence of the deceased to be necessary, the individually identifiable health information that is maintained by State or local health authorities on disease, including any death certificate, shall be released to the coroner of the county where the death occurred at no charge and without the requirement for a subpoena. The coroner shall follow all applicable Federal and State laws, regulations and confidentiality standards.

Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.