

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 1164

PRINTER NO. 2006

AMOUNT

No Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund
Local Funds

DATE INTRODUCED

May 25, 2020

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator J. Ward

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

Senate Bill 1164 amends the act of August 9, 1955 (P.L.323, No.130), known as the County Code, by further providing for coroner’s investigation.

The legislation amends section 1218-B of the County Code (relating to coroner’s investigation) to require that enumerated facts and circumstances of death that require a coroner’s investigation under current law shall be reported by persons having actual knowledge of the death, including a health care facility, personal care home or physician to the coroner for investigation. Under current law, an investigation is required under certain conditions in instances where a “...coroner having a view of the body...” shall investigate a death.

Senate Bill 1164 amends section 1218-B(a) by removing the phrase “coroner having a view of the body” to ensure that any death where the cause of death may have occurred under the enumerated facts and circumstances requiring an investigation (e.g. sudden death, suspicious circumstances, violence or trauma, contagious disease, etc.) must be reported to the coroner. Facts and circumstances concerning a death that require an investigation under current law include a death known or suspected to be due to contagious disease, and the legislation amends this provision to include “...any disease constituting a health disaster emergency or pandemic...” in response to the COVID-19 disaster emergency.

The legislation adds new subsection 1218-B(d) regarding data to be made available to a coroner. Where it is determined by the coroner to be necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of the office, the Department of Health shall provide electronic access to appropriate databases to the coroner for:

- Information reportable under the act of April 23, 1956 (1955 P.L.1510, No.500), known as the Disease Prevention and Control Law of 1955, for deaths known or suspected to be due to a contagious disease constituting a public health emergency or pandemic; and
- Any death certificates.

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This access given to the coroner shall be at no charge and shall not require the issuance of a subpoena. The coroner shall follow all applicable federal and state laws, regulations and confidentiality standards.

This legislation shall take effect immediately.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Senate Bill 1164 will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth or local funds.

The requirement for state or local health authorities on disease to release information to a coroner at no charge can be accommodated within the existing budgets of such authorities.