

HEARING BEFORE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
ON HB 2088  
January 11, 2022

Chairman Hennessey, Chairman Carroll and Members of the House Transportation Committee.

My name is Scott Lynn. I am the Coroner for Montour County and President of the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association. I appreciate your permitting me to be here today to talk about the need for HB 2088.

1. The county in which I serve is geographically the smallest in the state but has a large tertiary care center for adults and pediatrics which I see cases from about 26 different counties. Being a small county resources are precious to aid in the identification and a rapid notification of families. Most medical cases do not involve law enforcement of any type so the resource is not a tool available, let alone trying to identify the law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.
2. The PSCA supports organ donations whenever possible and believes in this opportunity to save countless lives. The crucial time we lose when trying to locate families for notification often takes us outside the window of 24 hours after death to allow donation. We cannot even make a referral for donation until family has been notified.
3. The ability to have access to JNET for the driver's license and next of kin information would assist us to timely notify family of the death of their loved one. Medicolegal death investigation is a public service, and conveying information in a clear, sensitive, and effective manner to the surviving family members is a critical aspect of the medicolegal death investigation system. How medicolegal professionals communicate with families in the aftermath of a death will have a direct impact on the families' ability to cope, their ability to process and accommodate what has happened, their view of the medicolegal system, and their willingness to cooperate with the investigation and future proceedings. (Scientific Working Group on Medicolegal Death Investigation, Guidelines for Communication with Next of Kin During Medicolegal Death investigations, June 13, 2012.) Without the JNET PennDOT tool, Coroners are sometimes left with trying to find next of kin through social media. I think that we all can agree that this is not an optimum means of finding out about the death of a loved one.

I would just note that the organ donation organizations are in the audience and willing to speak of the importance of this access as well as having provided written documentation to the committee and will be available after the meeting for questions if they are unable to speak during the hearing.