

Submitter: Joseph Sharps

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3127

Testimony in Support of House Bill 3127

Date: January 27, 2025

To: Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3127, which seeks to require all medical certifiers and medical examiners to utilize OVERS, Oregon's electronic reporting system, for completing death certificates.

Since its initial rollout in 2006, OVERS has undergone significant improvements, addressing early technical concerns and emerging as a critical tool for the accurate and timely processing of death certificates. The system has demonstrated its vast benefits, particularly in streamlining the production of certified copies that families urgently need to manage the complex financial, legal, and personal details that follow the loss of a loved one.

As a funeral director, I witness firsthand how delays in obtaining certified death certificates create additional hardships for grieving families. The current "Drop to Paper" process often results in prolonged wait times for essential documents, delaying the release of funds, the settlement of estates, and even the transfer of custody for dependents. These delays impose unnecessary stress on families during an already difficult time, compounding their grief with logistical and financial challenges.

From an operational standpoint, the inefficiencies of processing paper death certificates are significant. Funeral homes must divert valuable time and resources away from serving other families to track and follow up on paper forms. For all funeral homes, this inefficiency translates to increased labor costs and longer timelines for providing families with the care they deserve.

Mandating the use of OVERS by all medical certifiers is a straightforward and highly effective solution. Electronic death certificates improve efficiency, enhance accuracy, and ensure that families receive the documents they need within days rather than weeks. The streamlined process reduces errors, minimizes legibility concerns, and allows funeral directors to focus on their primary role: providing compassionate support to grieving families.

I understand that on the birthing side, a similar electronic mandate has been in place

for years, with widespread compliance. However, reluctance among general medical providers to participate in OVERS has hindered its full adoption. To ensure participation, I recommend linking the requirement to medical license renewals. Providers should be required to demonstrate that they are registered with and actively using OVERS before their license is issued or renewed. This incentive would reinforce compliance and eliminate the current bottlenecks caused by the Drop to Paper method.

The impact of passing HB 3127 would be transformative for the families we serve. By eliminating unnecessary delays and inefficiencies, we uphold the integrity of the death care process while providing families with the dignity and support they deserve during their time of loss.

No family should have to wait weeks for a legible and complete death certificate. I urge you to support HB 3127 to ensure that OVERS achieves its full potential as the vital system it was intended to be. Thank you for your attention and for considering the well-being of grieving families across Oregon.

Sincerely,
Joe Sharps
Funeral Director/Embalmer