

Requested by Senator GELSER BLOUIN

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
SENATE BILL 1550**

Delete pages 2 through 6 of the printed bill and insert:

“DEFINITIONS

“SECTION 1. ORS 146.003 is amended to read:

“146.003. As used in ORS 146.003 to 146.189 and 146.710 to 146.992, unless the context requires otherwise:

“(1) ‘Approved laboratory’ means a laboratory approved by the Chief Medical Examiner as competent to perform the blood sample analysis required by ORS 146.113 (2).

“(2) ‘Assistant district medical examiner’ means a physician licensed under ORS chapter 677, physician associate licensed under ORS 677.505 to 677.525 or nurse practitioner licensed under ORS 678.375 to 678.390 appointed by the district medical examiner to investigate and certify deaths within a county or district.

“(3) ‘Cause of death’ means the primary or basic disease process or injury ending life.

“(4) ‘Death requiring investigation’ means the death of a person occurring in any one of the circumstances set forth in ORS 146.090.

“(5) ‘District medical examiner’ means a physician licensed under ORS chapter 677, physician associate licensed under ORS 677.505 to 677.525 or

1 nurse practitioner licensed under ORS 678.375 to 678.390 appointed by the
2 Chief Medical Examiner to investigate and certify deaths within a county
3 or district, including a Deputy State Medical Examiner.

4 **“(6) ‘Family or household member’ has the meaning given that term**
5 **in ORS 135.230.**

6 “[~~(6)~~] (7) ‘Law enforcement agency’ means a county sheriff’s office, mu-
7 nicipal police department, police department established by a university un-
8 der ORS 352.121 or 353.125 and the Oregon State Police.

9 “[~~(7)~~] (8) ‘Legal intervention’ includes an execution pursuant to ORS
10 137.463, 137.467 and 137.473 and other legal use of force resulting in death.

11 “[~~(8)~~] (9) ‘Manner of death’ means the designation of the probable mode
12 of production of the cause of death, including natural, accidental, suicidal,
13 homicidal, legal intervention or undetermined.

14 “[~~(9)~~] (10) ‘Medical examiner’ means a physician licensed under ORS
15 chapter 677, physician associate licensed under ORS 677.505 to 677.525 or
16 nurse practitioner licensed under ORS 678.375 to 678.390 appointed as pro-
17 vided by ORS 146.003 to 146.189 to investigate and certify the cause and
18 manner of deaths requiring investigation, including the Chief Medical Ex-
19 aminer.

20 “[~~(10)~~] (11) ‘Medical-legal death investigator’ means a person appointed
21 by the district medical examiner to assist in the investigation of deaths
22 within a county.

23 “[~~(11)~~] (12) ‘Pathologist’ means a physician licensed under ORS chapter
24 677 who is eligible for certification by the American Board of Pathology, or
25 its successor organization, as approved by the State Medical Examiner Ad-
26 visory Board.

27 “[~~(12)~~] (13) ‘Unidentified human remains’ does not include human remains
28 that are unidentified human remains that are part of an archaeological site
29 or suspected of being Native American and covered under ORS chapters 97
30 and 390 and ORS 358.905 to 358.961.

1 **“LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION OF SUSPICIOUS DEATHS;**
2 **MANDATORY FAMILY INTERVIEWS AND AUTOPSY REQUESTS**

3
4 **“SECTION 2. Section 3 of this 2026 Act is added to and made a part**
5 **of ORS 146.003 to 146.189.**

6 **“SECTION 3. (1) If a decedent who is suspected to have died from**
7 **suicide, accident or other undetermined cause has previously been**
8 **identified as or alleged to have been a victim of domestic violence, or**
9 **has previously been identified as a victim of actual or suspected child**
10 **abuse in police reports, reports made to or by government agencies,**
11 **writings or photographs, restraining order declarations, eyewitness**
12 **statements or other evidence, an investigator, medical examiner, dep-**
13 **uty medical examiner, medical-legal death investigator or officer em-**
14 **ployed by a law enforcement agency shall, prior to making any**
15 **findings as to the cause or manner of death, review any documented**
16 **evidence of historical abuse and interview family members of the**
17 **decedent who have information relevant to the domestic violence or**
18 **child abuse upon the existence of three or more of the following con-**
19 **ditions:**

20 **“(a) The decedent died prematurely or in an untimely manner.**

21 **“(b) The scene of death suggests the appearance of death by suicide,**
22 **accident or other undetermined cause.**

23 **“(c) The decedent was in a romantic relationship in which one of**
24 **the persons in the relationship wanted the relationship to end.**

25 **“(d) The decedent had a known or documented history as a victim**
26 **of domestic violence, including intimidation, isolation or coercive**
27 **control.**

28 **“(e) The decedent was a minor child with a known or documented**
29 **history as a victim of child abuse, or the subject of a report of sus-**
30 **pected child abuse, within the past 12 months.**

1 “(f) The decedent was found dead in a home or place of residence.

2 “(g) The decedent was found by a family or household member.

3 “(h) The decedent had a history as a victim of strangulation,
4 choking or suffocation.

5 “(i) The decedent was last seen alive by a family or household
6 member, the child of the decedent, the child of a family or household
7 member or, if the decedent was a minor child as described in para-
8 graph (e) of this subsection, the child’s parent, guardian or caregiver
9 who was the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of such abuse.

10 “(j) A family or household member had control of the scene of
11 death before law enforcement arrived or, if the decedent was a minor
12 child as described in paragraph (e) of this subsection, the child’s par-
13 ent, guardian or caregiver who was the perpetrator or alleged
14 perpetrator of such abuse had control of the scene of death before law
15 enforcement arrived.

16 “(k) The body of the decedent has been moved from the location
17 where death occurred or the scene of death or other evidence appears
18 altered, modified or staged.

19 “(2) If an investigator, medical-legal death investigator or officer
20 employed by a law enforcement agency determines that a reasonable
21 basis exists to suspect that the death of a decedent, as described in
22 subsection (1) of this section, may be the result of domestic violence
23 or child abuse, the investigator, medical-legal death investigator or
24 officer shall submit a written request to the district medical examiner
25 for the county where the death occurred or to the medical examiner
26 for the performance of an autopsy under ORS 146.117.

27
28 **“AUTOPSIES**

29
30 **“SECTION 4.** ORS 146.117 is amended to read:

1 “146.117. (1)(a) A medical examiner or district attorney may order an
2 autopsy performed in any death requiring investigation. This authorization
3 for an autopsy shall permit the pathologist to remove and retain body tissues
4 or organs from the deceased for the purpose of the legal or medical deter-
5 mination of the manner or cause of death, or other purposes approved under
6 policies established by the State Medical Examiner Advisory Board.

7 **“(b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of this subsection, a medical-
8 legal death investigator or district attorney shall order the perform-
9 ance of an autopsy in any death upon receipt of a written request as
10 described in section 3 (2) of this 2026 Act or, if the death appears to
11 be due to suicide, accident or other undetermined cause, upon the oc-
12 currence of three or more of the following conditions:**

13 **“(A) The decedent died prematurely or in an untimely manner.**

14 **“(B) The scene of death suggests the appearance of death by suicide,
15 accident or other undetermined cause.**

16 **“(C) The decedent was in a romantic relationship in which one of
17 the persons in the relationship wanted the relationship to end.**

18 **“(D) The decedent had a known or documented history as a victim
19 of domestic violence, including intimidation, isolation or coercive
20 control.**

21 **“(E) The decedent was a minor child with a known or documented
22 history as a victim of child abuse, or the subject of a report of sus-
23 pected child abuse, within the past 12 months.**

24 **“(F) The decedent was found dead in a home or place of residence.**

25 **“(G) The decedent was found by a family or household member.**

26 **“(H) The decedent had a history as a victim of strangulation,
27 choking or suffocation.**

28 **“(I) The decedent was last seen alive by a family or household
29 member, the child of the decedent, the child of a family or household
30 member or, if the decedent was a minor child as described in subpar-**

1 **agraph (E) of this paragraph, the child’s parent, guardian or caregiver**
2 **who was the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of such abuse.**

3 **“(J) A family or household member had control of the scene of**
4 **death before law enforcement arrived or, if the decedent was a minor**
5 **child as described in subparagraph (E) of this paragraph, the child’s**
6 **parent, guardian or caregiver who was the perpetrator or alleged**
7 **perpetrator of such abuse had control of the scene of death before law**
8 **enforcement arrived.**

9 **“(K) The body of the decedent has been moved from the location**
10 **where death occurred or the scene of death or other evidence appears**
11 **altered, modified or staged.**

12 **“(2) If an autopsy is ordered, the medical examiner shall obtain the ser-**
13 **vices of a pathologist authorized under ORS 146.045 (2)(b).**

14 **“(3) A pathologist may not receive compensation for performing the**
15 **autopsy if, as medical examiner, the pathologist ordered the autopsy.**

17 **“RIGHT TO EXAMINE RECORDS**

18
19 **“SECTION 5. ORS 146.035 is amended to read:**

20 **“146.035. (1) There is established within the Department of State Police**
21 **the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the purpose of directing and**
22 **supporting the state death investigation program.**

23 **“(2) The Chief Medical Examiner shall manage all aspects of the Office**
24 **of the Chief Medical Examiner’s program.**

25 **“(3) Subject to the State Personnel Relations Law, the Chief Medical**
26 **Examiner may employ or discharge other personnel of the Office of the Chief**
27 **Medical Examiner.**

28 **“(4) The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner shall:**

29 **“(a) File and maintain appropriate reports on all deaths requiring inves-**
30 **tigation.**

1 “(b) Maintain an accurate list of all active district medical examiners,
2 assistant district medical examiners and designated pathologists.

3 “(c) Transmit monthly to the Department of Transportation a report for
4 the preceding calendar month of all information obtained under ORS 146.113.

5 “(5) Notwithstanding ORS 192.345 (36) **and 192.355 (2)(b):**

6 “(a) Any parent, spouse, sibling, child or personal representative of the
7 deceased, or any person who may be criminally or civilly liable for the death,
8 or their authorized representatives respectively, may examine and obtain
9 copies of any medical examiner’s report, autopsy report or laboratory test
10 report ordered by a medical examiner under ORS 146.117.

11 **“(b)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph,**
12 **if an investigating law enforcement agency and medical examiner find**
13 **that the manner of death is not homicide and close the case, any**
14 **parent, spouse, sibling, child or personal representative of the de-**
15 **ceased may examine and obtain without undue delay:**

16 **“(i) Copies of any evidence or records related to the deceased’s case**
17 **that are in the custody of the law enforcement agency or medical ex-**
18 **aminer; and**

19 **“(ii) Photographs, images, negatives, prints or video, including body**
20 **camera video, of the body, or any portion of the body, of the deceased**
21 **that was generated during an autopsy by a designated pathologist, or**
22 **that was generated during the investigation by a district medical ex-**
23 **aminer, assistant district medical examiner, medical-legal death in-**
24 **vestigator or employee of a law enforcement agency.**

25 **“(B) Subparagraph (A) of this paragraph does not:**

26 **“(i) Require a law enforcement agency to provide evidence or re-**
27 **ords if providing such evidence or records would compromise a**
28 **pending investigation.**

29 **“(ii) Affect the lawful discretion provided to a law enforcement**
30 **agency to carry out investigations of death.**

1 “(iii) Impose any liability on a law enforcement agency in relation
2 to the investigation of deaths.

3 “(iv) Require a law enforcement agency or other public body to
4 cover the cost of an independent review of the manner and cause of
5 death.

6 “[(b)] (c) The system described in ORS 192.517 (1) shall have access to
7 reports described in this subsection as provided in ORS 192.517.

8
9 **“NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO DECEDENT’S FAMILY**

10
11 **“SECTION 6. Section 7 of this 2026 Act is added to and made a part**
12 **of ORS 146.003 to 146.189.**

13 **“SECTION 7. (1) Upon opening an investigation into the death of a**
14 **decedent who is suspected to have died from suicide, accident or other**
15 **undetermined cause, a law enforcement agency shall provide written**
16 **notice to known members of the decedent’s family of the law and**
17 **procedure for:**

18 **“(a) Family members to obtain evidence or records under ORS**
19 **146.035.**

20 **“(b) A medical examiner or district attorney to order an autopsy**
21 **under ORS 146.117.**

22 **“(c) A district attorney to order an inquest under ORS 146.135.**

23 **“(d) A law enforcement agency to determine whether family or**
24 **household members of the decedent must be interviewed under section**
25 **3 of this 2026 Act.**

26 **“(2) If a decedent who is suspected to have died from suicide, acci-**
27 **dent or other undetermined cause has previously been identified as or**
28 **alleged to have been a victim of domestic violence, or has previously**
29 **been identified as a victim of actual or suspected child abuse in police**
30 **reports, reports made to or by government agencies, writings or pho-**

1 tographs, restraining order declarations, eyewitness statements or
2 other evidence, a law enforcement agency shall provide the written
3 notice required under subsection (1) of this section to:

4 “(a) At least one parent, sibling over the age of 18 or other family
5 member of the decedent who was not the perpetrator or alleged
6 perpetrator of the domestic violence or child abuse; and

7 “(b) Any family member of the decedent, upon request, who was
8 not the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of the domestic violence or
9 child abuse.

10
11 **“APPLICABILITY**

12
13 **“SECTION 8.** Sections 3 and 7 of this 2026 Act and the amendments
14 to ORS 146.003, 146.035 and 146.117 by sections 1, 4 and 5 of this 2026
15 Act apply to deaths occurring on or after the effective date of this 2026
16 Act.

17
18 **“CAPTIONS**

19
20 **“SECTION 9.** The unit captions used in this 2026 Act are provided
21 only for the convenience of the reader and do not become part of the
22 statutory law of this state or express any legislative intent in the
23 enactment of this 2026 Act.”.