



CASS COUNTY CORONER Kriste Rehkamp Ross, B.S. F-ABMDI

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Testimony prepared for:
House Human Services Committee
Prepared January 23, 2023
Kriste Ross, Coroner
Cass County Government

RE: House Bill No. 1481

Committee Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kriste Ross, Coroner for Cass County. I am here in support of House Bill 1481. I started with the Cass County Coroner's Office in 2001 under the supervision of Dr. John Baird. With his guidance and support, I began doing death investigations in 2007. In 2011, I became a certified medicolegal death investigator and began signing death certificates. While I was able to discuss cases with Dr. Baird when needed, much of my education and ability to determine cause and manner of death came from my extensive training through the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators, International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, the CDC and NIJ. I've been training on how to complete a death certificate thoroughly and accurately, and often am contacted by the Department of Vital Records to amend death certificates that have been completed by a medical provider in error. For better understanding on accurate completion of death certificates, I have met with physicians at local hospitals, explaining how to properly sign death certificates and offer literature for reference.

The Cass County Coroner's Office receives calls, both reportable (defined under NDCC 11-19) and non-reportable deaths. Our office records all reported deaths which are also documented in annual statistics and shared with local and state agencies. While deaths are reported to us most often by nursing staff, he/she may not know what the attending physician will enter on certificate as the cause of death.

I am in support of this bill, as deaths that occur in my county may be in question or have a death certificate that is completed inaccurately. Not all deaths are reported to the county coroner. Any questions about deaths ultimately need to be investigated, which could have easily been resolved by knowing the cause of death.

Sincerely,

Kriste Ross
Cass County Government, Coroner