



# Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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## Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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**Bill:** [H.B. 482 of the 130th G.A.](#)

**Date:** June 25, 2014

**Status:** As Introduced

**Sponsor:** Rep. Redfern

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** Yes

**Contents:** Requires a coroner to perform an autopsy when a death appears to have been by suicide and makes other changes

### State Fiscal Highlights

- No direct fiscal effect on the state.

### Local Fiscal Highlights

- The bill requires a county coroner or deputy coroner to perform an autopsy when the cause of death is suspected to be suicide. According to the Ohio State Coroners Association, the approximate cost of a typical autopsy is \$1,600, although this figure can vary according to the circumstances.
- According to records maintained by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), there has been an average of 1,400 suicides statewide annually between calendar years 2007 and 2011. Of those 1,400 suicides, 900 were autopsied. Assuming the same rate of suicides in the future, coroners statewide could incur additional costs of \$800,000 (500 additional autopsies x \$1,600) annually as a result of the bill.

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## Detailed Fiscal Analysis

### Overview

The bill requires a coroner or a deputy coroner to go to a dead body, take charge of it, and perform an autopsy when the manner of death appears to have been by suicide. The bill also requires newly elected and appointed county coroners to attend at least one hour of continuing education that focuses on suicide investigations. Overall, county coroners will incur new costs to conduct the additional autopsies that will be required under the bill. Based on statewide suicide and autopsy statistics between calendar years 2007 and 2011, this additional cost could be up to \$800,000 annually statewide. More details concerning the fiscal effects of the bill are provided below.

## **Costs for performing additional autopsies**

As a consequence of the bill, county coroners will be required to conduct additional autopsies. The Ohio State Coroners Association (OSCA) reports that the average cost of performing an autopsy is approximately \$1,600, although this cost can fluctuate depending on the circumstances and subject of the autopsy. According to data from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), there were on average 1,400 suicides annually between 2007 and 2011. About 900 received autopsies, leaving 500 without autopsies. Thus, if the autopsy requirement in the bill were in effect during this time, and each autopsy cost approximately \$1,600 to perform, coroners statewide would have incurred additional costs of \$800,000 (500 autopsies x \$1,600) annually. The principal source of funding for coroners offices is the county general fund budget.

The bill specifies which individuals have the authority to take charge of a dead body when the manner of death appears to have been by suicide. Under current law, except in the case of an automobile accident, a coroner, deputy coroner, appointed investigator, or any other person designated by the coroner is permitted to go to a dead body and take charge of it. Under the bill, when a coroner's office has been notified that the manner of death appears to have been by suicide, the coroner or deputy coroner is required to go to a dead body and take charge of it. According to OSCA, transportation costs for moving a dead body can range from \$200 to \$300. These costs are factored into the total cost of the autopsy (approximately \$1,600 on average) cited above.

## **Continuing education**

The bill revises the continuing education requirements for newly elected and appointed coroners by requiring the completion of a program focusing on suicide investigations. Under current law, a newly elected coroner must complete 16 hours of continuing education after the general election but before taking office, and a newly appointed coroner must complete 16 hours of continuing education within 90 days after appointment. These programs are sponsored by OSCA and all costs associated are covered by the county coroners' membership dues paid to OSCA. The bill requires one of those hours to focus on how suicide investigations are conducted. That hour of continuing education is to be conducted by personnel from the Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI). BCI expects there to be some nominal additional costs for preparing and presenting this programming; however, this small cost would be absorbed within the Bureau's existing operating budget.