

## SB 536 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

---

**Prepared By:** Alexandra Kihn-Stang, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 4/22

---

#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure expands the types of providers who may serve as medical examiners to include licensed physician associates and nurse practitioners, and clarifies that physicians serving in this role must be licensed.

*Fiscal impact: No fiscal impact*

*Revenue impact: No revenue impact*

*SENATE VOTE: Ayes, 27; Nays, 2*

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

##### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

##### BACKGROUND:

House Bill 4003 ([2024](#)) directed the Oregon State Police to study the causes of, and solutions to, the shortage of medical examiners in Oregon. The resulting [State Medical Examiner System Analysis](#) report, informed by the Medical Examiner Improvement in Oregon Workgroup (MEIOW), was submitted to the Legislative Assembly in September of 2024. The report highlighted difficulties in staffing county-level medical examiner positions, partly due to a national shortage of forensic pathologists, and noted that medical examiner caseloads in Oregon are up to twice the nationally recommended level.

The Oregon State Police oversees the state medical examiner system. Until July 2023, the State Medical Examiner's Office also served as the county medical examiner for 14 counties. As of that date, counties became responsible for initial investigations, including signing death certificates, in routine cases that do not require direct examination by a forensic pathologist. Under current Oregon law ([ORS 146.003](#)), medical examiners must be physicians. However, county medical examiners in Oregon are not forensic pathologists, are not required to receive forensic training, and do not perform autopsies. In some cases that do not fall under the jurisdiction of a medical examiner, physician associates and nurse practitioners may serve as medical certifiers and sign death certificates ([ORS 432.133](#)).

Senate Bill 536 expands the types of providers who may serve as medical examiners to include licensed physician associates and nurse practitioners, and clarifies that physicians serving in this role must be licensed.