
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

October 23, 2012

Ald. Milele A. Coggs
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Council votes to support County Board's Medical Examiner legislation

County Board file establishes new policy for ME in cases involving death while in law enforcement custody

The Common Council today approved a resolution supporting Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors legislation that would direct the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner to establish and codify policies relating to deaths of persons while in law enforcement custody.

Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, primary sponsor of file# 120930 (approved under immediate adoption), said the Council's action indicates "solidarity, support and affirmative communication" with the County Board on its resolution calling for the changes in policy in the Medical Examiner's handling of death-in-custody cases.

"There is still some work to be done for the county legislation to be passed, but I am pleased by the show of support by my colleagues and I am optimistic the County Board will approve the file on November 1," Alderwoman Coggs said.

The County board legislation (file# 12-680) provides for review of all available reports, including video records of involved agencies, peer review within the Medical Examiner's office, and concurrence of the chief medical examiner in the final report of the cause of death. It does not in any manner restrain or interfere with the independent medical and professional judgment of the chief medical examiner or deputy medical examiners.

Several members of the Council met with Medical Examiner Dr. Brian L. Peterson on September 28 to discuss the in-custody death last year of Derek Williams. The ME initially ruled that Mr. Williams died of natural causes, but then – after months of inquiries and requests by family and media, and following the release of video evidence – revised the cause of death finding to "homicide."

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Medical Examiner file/ADD ONE

Following that meeting, Council members urged county leaders to use the legislative process to codify policy changes to prevent missteps from happening again in the case of a person who dies in the custody of police or as a result of the actions of police personnel.

The resolution of support passed by the Council today included co-sponsorship by **Alderman Willie C. Wade, Alderman José G. Pérez, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderman Willie L. Hines, Jr., and Alderman Nik Kovac.**

If approved by the County Board, the county legislation directs the chief medical examiner and the county corporation counsel to study policy changes in cases of in-custody deaths and make recommendations in January 2013 about implementation of policy changes and codification of procedures in the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances.

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