



RON O'BRIEN

FRANKLIN COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

May 22, 2017

State Representative Larry Householder
Ohio House
77 S. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: HB 146

Dear Representative Householder:

Thank you for the invitation to testify on House Bill 146 which we have discussed both before and after its introduction in connection with a case here in Franklin County where the death certificate was changed several years after the death of Debra Meadows and we had an Aggravated Vehicular Homicide case pending for trial against Timothy Castle, 14CR-4211. That case had to be dismissed where the cause of death was changed from death due to two contributing causes-blunt force trauma and cancer-to a single cause of death due to natural causes.

You contacted me for information in connection with the case and subsequently introduced HB 146 to require a judicial petition with notice to the prosecutor before a change in the cause of death is made by a county coroner.

Since that time a similar change in a death certificate has been made but in the reverse--the death of Shakyla Henry that had been classified as natural in January, 2016 was changed to homicide in December, 2016. See attached *Dispatch* news article that references both the Meadows and the Henry cases.

Finally, several years ago after a jury trial with a conviction for Aggravated Murder against Timothy Howard, the cause of death was changed by the Coroner from homicide to undetermined and currently there is a motion for a new trial that is pending a hearing in Common Pleas Court.

In each of these cases your Bill would require the Coroner to seek a hearing in Common Pleas Court before the change in the cause of death is made and would allow input from affected parties. If you or other members of the General Assembly have any questions about these three cases I would be happy to provide additional details.

Very truly yours,

Ron O'Brien
Prosecuting Attorney