



COLLEGE of AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS

April 29, 2026

Representative Rhonda Gaye Butler
900 North 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: In Opposition to House Bill 454 (Enacts the Gracey Claire Rushing Act Which Provides for the Chain of Custody for Human Remains and Internal Organs)

Dear Representative Butler,

On behalf of the College of American Pathologists (CAP) and Louisiana Pathology Society (LPS), we write to express concerns regarding House Bill 454's proposed requirements on the practice of forensic medicine.

While the bill came from good intent, the proposed requirement to provide families with a detailed, written inventory of all organs and their disposition within 24 hours could significantly impact hospitals and forensic autopsy centers by adding administrative burden, operational complexity, and potential distress for families. These practices are not consistent with standard forensic practice. Hospital autopsy practices typically avoid highly granular detail unless specifically requested, focusing instead on answering clinical questions and supporting funeral planning; mandating exhaustive documentation risks overwhelming families who may not want such information while also increasing staff workload and documentation requirements.

Furthermore, the proposed language to include justification for organ retention, duration, and next-of-kin (NOK) notification within the autopsy report is problematic. Autopsy reports are frequently finalized weeks to months after the examination, which could delay timely notification to families rather than improve transparency.

The bill's broad language referring to "autopsies" and "forensic investigations" and establishing a universal chain-of-custody protocol also raises concern that it could extend beyond medicolegal cases to include consented hospital autopsies, thereby expanding its impact across routine hospital practice. Additionally, if applied in this broader way, House Bill 454's proposed requirements could create workflow challenges for Louisiana pathologists and coordination issues with funeral directors, who may be expected to verify complex inventories without clear standards or feasibility.

Thank you for your consideration and courtesy.

Sincerely,

Jim Zhai, MD, FCAP
President, College of American Pathologists

cc: Maria W. Bowen, Vice President, Governmental Affairs, Louisiana State Medical Association
MJ Mendez, JD, Executive Vice President, National Association of Medical Examiners