

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 359

Commending the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, LifeNet Health, Wendy M. Gunther, MD, Edward Ferreol, MD, and the late Raymond J. Murray.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 2023

WHEREAS, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner operates a statewide medical examiner system with four district offices located in Norfolk, Richmond, Manassas, and Roanoke; and

WHEREAS, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, in accordance with the Code of Virginia, conducts investigations "Upon the death of any person from trauma, injury, violence, poisoning, accident, suicide or homicide, or suddenly when in apparent good health, or when unattended by a physician, or in jail, prison, other correctional institution or in police custody, or who is an individual receiving services in a state hospital or training center operated by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, or suddenly as an apparent result of fire, or in any suspicious, unusual or unnatural manner, or the sudden death of any infant"; and

WHEREAS, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, following the national standard of care upon investigating the death of an infant or child, would historically deny the donation of hearts prior to the forensic examination and autopsy; and

WHEREAS, working collaboratively with the organ and tissue procurement organization LifeNet Health, OCME recognized and accepted that pediatric cases could not successfully receive non-human heart valves for the medical correction of cardiac issues; and

WHEREAS, Wendy Gunther, MD, assistant chief medical examiner in the Tidewater District, Edward Ferreol, MD, senior manager of technical training and development with LifeNet Health, and Raymond J. Murray, medical examiner and funeral liaison officer with LifeNet Health, coordinated, developed, and introduced "the Virginia Protocol" as an approved method to examine and harvest donated pediatric hearts for valves and return the heart to the forensic pathologist for further study and review after harvest; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gunther, Dr. Ferreol, and Raymond Murray presented "Pediatric Cadaver Heart Valve Donation in the Medical Examiner System: A Resource-Conserving Method" at the National Association of Medical Examiners Annual Meeting in September 2004 in Nashville, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gunther published a check sample in *Forensic Pathology*, Volume 47, Number 6, a learning tool used nationally by the forensic pathology community, providing the history and development of the Virginia Protocol by the Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and LifeNet Health; and

WHEREAS, since 2005, through the profound generosity of Virginia families, valves from donated pediatric hearts have replaced absent, damaged, or diseased heart valves in infants, children, and youth in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, LifeNet Health, Wendy M. Gunther, MD, Edward Ferreol, MD, and the late Raymond J. Murray hereby be commended for their dedication, expertise, and work to change the lives and improve the health of infants, children, and youths in the Commonwealth and beyond; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Wendy Gunther, MD, Edward Ferreol, MD, and Laura Murray, on behalf of Raymond J. Murray, as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for their achievements with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and LifeNet Health.

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