

# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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KATHLEEN KRAUSE  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
Kern County Administrative Center  
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor  
Bakersfield, California 93301  
Telephone (661) 868-3585  
TTY Relay 800-735-2929

July 8, 2025

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo  
Chair, Senate Local Government Committee  
State Capitol, Room 407  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 1108 (Hart), Outsourcing coroner review of in-custody deaths – OPPOSE**

Dear Senator Durazo,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong opposition to AB 1108 (Hart), which would prohibit sheriff-coroners in counties where the offices are consolidated from determining the cause, manner, and circumstances of in-custody deaths and would instead mandate the outsourcing of these cases to a third-party or external medical examiner.

This bill represents a significant and costly state mandate that undermines the professional and functional integrity of our existing Sheriff-Coroner model, which has served Kern County effectively for over three decades. In 1994, the County merged the Coroner and Public Administrator offices with the Sheriff's Office to improve operational efficiency, create fiscal savings, and ensure better service delivery. This system is intentionally structured to maintain independence and neutrality—our forensic pathologists determine the cause and manner of death, not sworn officers, and our deputy coroners conduct investigations independently from our deputy sheriffs.

Mandating outsourcing for in-custody deaths, regardless of circumstances, would impose logistical challenges, increased costs, and delays for grieving families. With the closest independent medical examiner's office over 100 miles away, Kern County residents could be forced to bear significant financial and emotional burdens, including high transportation costs and service delays. Furthermore, AB 1108 lacks clarity on what constitutes a conflict of interest, leaving counties exposed to inconsistent application and potential legal challenges.

Additionally, the bill exacerbates an existing shortage of qualified forensic pathologists, a nationwide concern, and could require counties to hire or contract with scarce and expensive professionals to fulfill the new mandate, all without any state funding.

Kern County strongly believes that local governance is best equipped to determine the appropriate structure and oversight for death investigations. Imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate from Sacramento disregards the demonstrated success and accountability of our current model and erodes local control.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors respectfully urges you to vote **NO on AB 1108**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Leticia Perez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Leticia Perez, Chair  
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Local Government Committee  
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation  
Kern County Sheriff's Office  
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange