

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011

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SENATE BILL 191
Judiciary I Committee Substitute Adopted 3/21/11

Short Title: Death Certificate Signatures.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 3, 2011

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS
3 TO COMPLETE MEDICAL CERTIFICATIONS AS TO THE CAUSE OF DEATH FOR
4 DEATH REGISTRATION AND TO ALLOW ELECTRONIC OR FACSIMILE
5 SIGNATURES ON DEATH CERTIFICATES WITHOUT SPECIFIC APPROVAL BY
6 THE STATE REGISTRAR.

7 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

8 **SECTION 1.** G.S. 90-18.1 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

9 "(e1) Any medical certification completed by a physician assistant for a death certificate
10 shall be deemed to have been authorized by the physician approved by the Board as the
11 supervisor of the physician assistant, and the supervising physician shall be responsible for
12 authorizing the completion of the medical certification."

13 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 90-18.2 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

14 "(e1) Any medical certification completed by a nurse practitioner for a death certificate
15 shall be deemed to have been authorized by the physician approved by the boards as the
16 supervisor of the nurse practitioner, and the supervising physician shall be responsible for
17 authorizing the completion of the medical certification."

18 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 130A-115(c) and (d) read as rewritten:

19 "(c) The medical certification shall be completed and signed by the physician in charge
20 of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death, except when the death
21 falls within the circumstances described in G.S. 130A-383. In the absence of the physician or
22 with the physician's approval, the certificate may be completed and signed by an associate
23 physician, a physician assistant in a manner consistent with G.S. 90-18.1(e1), a nurse
24 practitioner in a manner consistent with G.S. 90-18.2(e1), the chief medical officer of the
25 hospital or facility in which the death occurred or a physician who performed an autopsy upon
26 the decedent under the following circumstances: the individual has access to the medical
27 history of the deceased; the individual has viewed the deceased at or after death; and the death
28 is due to natural causes. ~~When specifically approved by the State Registrar, an~~ An electronic
29 signature or facsimile signature of the ~~physician-physician, physician assistant, or nurse~~
30 ~~practitioner~~ shall be acceptable. As used in this section, the term electronic signature has the
31 same meaning as applies in G.S. 66-58.2 or G.S. 66-312. The ~~physician-physician, physician~~
32 ~~assistant, or nurse practitioner~~ shall state the cause of death on the certificate in definite and
33 precise terms. A certificate containing any indefinite terms or denoting only symptoms of
34 disease or conditions resulting from disease as defined by the State Registrar, shall be returned
35 to the person making the medical certification for correction and more definite statement.

36 (d) The ~~physician-physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or medical~~
37 examiner making the medical certification as to the cause of death shall complete the medical



1 certification no more than three days after death. The ~~physician~~ physician, physician assistant,
2 nurse practitioner, or medical examiner may, in appropriate cases, designate the cause of death
3 as unknown pending an autopsy or upon some other reasonable cause for delay, but shall send
4 the supplementary information to the local registrar as soon as it is obtained."

5 **SECTION 4.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2011, and applies to
6 certifications signed on or after that date.