
News From State Senator
Velmanette Montgomery

18th Senatorial District

Chairperson, NYS Senate Committee on Children and Families



SENATE APPROVES NURSE PRACTITIONERS TO SIGN DEATH CERTIFICATES

The NYS Senate passed legislation (S.2969) this week permitting the nearly 13,000 certified nurse practitioners from across the state to sign death certificates ensuring the delivery of appropriate and medically-accurate postmortem care.

The legislation, sponsored by **Senator Velmanette Montgomery** (D-Brooklyn), gives nurse practitioners the authority and responsibility to complete death certificates in the same manner as physicians, medical examiners and coroners.

Certified nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have advanced education and clinical preparation to provide primary care, diagnose and treat acute and chronic illnesses in a variety of specialties. Under current law, they are empowered to pronounce death, ascertain the cause of death and provide the medical information required by the death certificate, but by law, they **are not** authorized to sign the death certificate.

"Nurse practitioners are often the last caregiver in attendance when a patient dies. If the state deems them qualified to diagnose and treat a person while they are living, there is no logical reason for denying these skilled health care professionals from completing a certificate of death," said Montgomery, noting that nurse practitioners are authorized to sign death certificates in Arizona, Connecticut, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington.

The bill recognizes the important service nurse practitioners provide to the public. In many instances, they serve as the primary care provider and are often most accessible at the time of their patient's death. "This is especially true in some rural communities where there is a shortage of physicians," Montgomery said. "In those cases," she added, "since death certificates must be signed within a specific period of time after death, nurse practitioners would be able to facilitate the delivery of appropriate and timely postmortem care and help ease the impact of death on a patient's family."

According to the **Healthcare Association of New York State**, "Allowing nurse practitioners to sign death certificates, including the cause of death section, should strengthen the accuracy of information required by the state and federal government to guide public health efforts." The bill is also expected to help reduce costs by avoiding unnecessary referral to doctors and/or unnecessary autopsies while remaining sensitive and responsive to the needs of families and loved ones at the time of death.

Senator Montgomery is the Chair of the Senate Committee on Children and Families and a long-standing member of the Senate Committee on Health. The Assembly bill (A.2028-A) is sponsored by **Assemblywoman Susan John** (D-Rochester). It is under review by the Assembly Higher Education Committee .