

The House Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security offers the following substitute to HB 646:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 16 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
2 coroners, so as to provide minimum salaries of coroners; to revise compensation provisions  
3 for deputy coroners; to provide for benefits to certain coroners; to remove certain death  
4 investigation fees; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal  
5 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 16 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to coroners, is  
9 amended by revising Code Section 45-16-7, relating to appointment of deputy coroners, oath,  
10 bond, fees, powers, and qualifications, as follows:

11 "45-16-7.

12 (a) ~~As soon as practicable after July 1, 1980, and at~~ At the beginning of each term of the  
13 ~~coroner thereafter~~, the coroner of each county shall appoint a deputy coroner or coroners  
14 thereafter, the coroner of each county shall appoint a deputy coroner or coroners as  
15 provided in this Code section. A deputy coroner shall be appointed for each county, and  
16 one or more additional deputy coroners may be appointed for any county, ~~in the discretion~~

H. B. 646 (SUB)

17 ~~of the coroner pursuant to the provisions of subsection (c) of this Code section.~~ Each  
18 deputy coroner shall serve at the pleasure of the coroner and may be replaced by the  
19 coroner at any time. Each deputy coroner shall take the same oath, give the same bond, be  
20 ~~entitled to the same fees,~~ and have the same powers as the coroner;<sup>2</sup> but a deputy coroner  
21 shall act as coroner only when the coroner is himself or herself unable to act.

22 (b) No person shall be eligible to hold the office of deputy coroner unless he or she holds  
23 a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. Any deputy coroner who is in office  
24 on July 1, 1980, however, shall without limitation be eligible to serve as deputy coroner at  
25 any time after said date without regard to whether he or she meets the requirements of this  
26 subsection.

27 (c) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, ~~there shall be appointed only one deputy~~  
28 ~~coroner, and, on and after July 1, 1999,~~ there shall only be one deputy coroner in each such  
29 county unless otherwise approved by the local governing authority of the county in the  
30 annual budget of the coroner's office.

31 (d) A deputy coroner shall receive:

32 (1) A fee of at least \$250.00 for each case the deputy coroner works; and

33 (2) A per diem of \$100.00 for each day the deputy coroner does not work a case;  
34 provided, however, that a deputy coroner shall not be entitled to a per diem pursuant to  
35 this paragraph for more than 90 days in a calendar year; provided, further, that sufficient  
36 funds have been budgeted by the governing authority of the county.

37 (e) As of January 1, 2026, any deputy coroner being compensated by a county in an  
38 amount greater than the compensation formulas provided in subsection (d) of this Code  
39 section shall not have his or her compensation reduced for the remainder of the term of the  
40 coroner."

**SECTION 2.**

41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66

Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 45-16-11, relating to compensation of county coroners, increases, calculation, supplements, and expenses, as follows:

"45-16-11.

(a)(1) Any other law to the contrary notwithstanding, the minimum annual salary of each coroner in any of the counties in this state in the following population brackets shall be fixed according to the population of the county in which he or she serves, as determined by the United States decennial census of ~~1990~~ 2020 or any future such census. Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, each such coroner shall receive an annual salary, payable in equal monthly installments from the funds of the coroner's county, of not less than the amount fixed in the following schedule:

<u>Population</u>	<u>Minimum Salary</u>
<del>0 — 11,889</del> .....	<del>\$ 1,200.00</del>
<del>11,890 — 19,999</del> .....	<del>2,400.00</del>
<del>20,000 — 34,999</del> .....	<del>3,600.00</del>
<u>0 — 5,999</u> .....	<u>\$17,700.00</u>
<u>6,000 — 11,889</u> .....	<u>20,000.00</u>
<u>11,890 — 19,999</u> .....	<u>25,000.00</u>
<u>20,000 — 28,999</u> .....	<u>30,000.00</u>
<u>29,000 — 38,999</u> .....	<u>35,000.00</u>
<u>39,000 — 49,999</u> .....	<u>40,000.00</u>
<u>50,000 — 74,999</u> .....	<u>45,000.00</u>
<u>75,000 — 99,999</u> .....	<u>50,000.00</u>
<u>100,000 — 149,999</u> .....	<u>55,000.00</u>
<u>150,000 — 199,999</u> .....	<u>70,000.00</u>
<u>200,000 — 249,999</u> .....	<u>80,000.00</u>

67	<u>250,000 — 299,999</u> .....	<u>90,000.00</u>
68	<u>300,000 — 399,999</u> .....	<u>95,000.00</u>
69	<u>400,000 — 499,999</u> .....	<u>100,000.00</u>
70	<u>500,000 or more</u> .....	<u>105,000.00</u>

71 (2) Whenever, after January 1, 2026, the state employees subject to compensation plans  
72 authorized and approved in accordance with Code Section 45-20-4 receive a  
73 cost-of-living increase or general performance based increase of a certain percentage or  
74 a certain amount, the amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule in paragraph (1) of  
75 this subsection, and in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts derived by increasing  
76 each of said amounts through the application of longevity increases pursuant to  
77 subsection (b) of this Code section, where applicable, shall be increased by the same  
78 percentage or same amount applicable to such state employees. If the cost-of-living  
79 increase or general performance based increase received by state employees is in different  
80 percentages or different amounts as to certain categories of employees, the amounts fixed  
81 in the minimum salary schedule in paragraph (1) of this subsection, and in Code  
82 Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts derived through the application of longevity  
83 increases, shall be increased by a percentage or an amount not to exceed the average  
84 percentage or average amount of the general increase in salary granted to the state  
85 employees. The Office of Planning and Budget shall calculate the average percentage  
86 increase or average amount increase when necessary. The periodic changes in the  
87 amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule in paragraph (1) of this subsection, and  
88 in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts derived through the application of longevity  
89 increases, as authorized by this paragraph shall become effective on the first day of  
90 January following the date that the cost-of-living increases received by state employees  
91 become effective; provided, however, that, if the cost-of-living increases or general  
92 performance based increases received by state employees become effective on January 1,  
93 such periodic changes in the amounts fixed in the minimum salary schedule in

94 paragraph (1) of this subsection, and in Code Section 45-16-11.1, or the amounts derived  
95 through the application of longevity increases, as authorized by this paragraph shall  
96 become effective on the same date that the cost-of-living increases or general  
97 performance based increases received by state employees become effective.

98 (3) The county governing authority may supplement the minimum annual salary of the  
99 coroner in such amount as it may fix from time to time; but no coroner's compensation  
100 supplement shall be decreased during any term of office. Any prior expenditure of  
101 county funds to supplement the coroner's salary in the manner authorized by this  
102 paragraph is ratified and confirmed. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall prohibit  
103 the General Assembly by local law from supplementing the annual salary of the coroner.

104 (a.1) In the event that the coroner or his or her immediate predecessor spent at least 2,080  
105 hours on duties related to his or her role as the coroner and the coroner's office in such  
106 county administered at least 100 death investigations in the preceding calendar year, the  
107 county governing authority shall provide the coroner the same employment benefits it  
108 provides the clerk of the superior court, judge of the probate court, sheriff, or tax  
109 commissioner.

110 (b) The amounts provided in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this Code section and Code  
111 Section 45-16-11.1, as increased by paragraph (2) of subsection (a) of this Code section,  
112 shall be increased by multiplying said amounts by the percentage which equals 5 percent  
113 times the number of completed four-year terms of office served by any coroner after  
114 December 31, ~~2000~~ 2024, effective the first day of January following the completion of  
115 each such period of service.

116 ~~(c) The minimum salaries provided for under this Code section shall be in addition to any~~  
117 ~~fees, including the death investigation fee provided for under subsection (b) of Code~~  
118 ~~Section 45-16-27, paid by the county governing authority to the coroner on a per-call basis~~  
119 ~~and in addition to any expenses~~ Reserved.

120 (d) The minimum salaries provided for in this Code section shall be considered as salary  
121 only. Expenses for deputies, equipment, supplies, copying equipment, and other necessary  
122 and reasonable expenses for the operation of a coroner's office shall come from funds other  
123 than the funds specified as salary in this Code section.

124 (e) This Code section shall not be construed to reduce the salary of any coroner in office  
125 on July 1, ~~2001~~ 2026; provided, however, that successors to such coroners in office on  
126 July 1, ~~2001~~ 2026, shall be governed by the provisions of this Code section. All local  
127 legislation in effect on ~~July 1, 2001~~ January 1, 2026, or enacted thereafter affecting  
128 compensation for coroners of the various counties shall be of full force and effect except  
129 where the same provides for a salary lower than provided in this Code section, in which  
130 event this Code section shall prevail."

131 **SECTION 3.**

132 Said chapter is further amended by repealing subsections (b) and (b.1) of Code  
133 Section 45-16-27, relating to when inquest to be held, special situations, coroner's fee,  
134 issuance of subpoenas, cost of copying, and limited disclosure of photographs, and  
135 designating subsection (b) as reserved.

136 **SECTION 4.**

137 This Act shall become effective on January 1, 2026.

138 **SECTION 5.**

139 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.