

## **Representative Helm Comments**

### **on House Bill 2088**

Today the committee will be listening to testimony and asking questions regarding House Bill 2088. This legislation would provide coroners with greater access to certain records maintained by PennDOT and to JNET, which can aid our coroners when identifying next of kin for the deceased and when investigating causes of death.

For those who are unfamiliar with JNET, JNET is a portal that allows secured access by criminal justice agencies to Commonwealth records provided by JNET's data partners such as (PennDOT, Labor and Industry, Human Services, PA Courts, PA State Police, and others). Coroners have been recently denied JNET access or have had access revoked due to questions regarding whether a coroner's office is a "criminal justice agency".

PennDOT's current policy is that non-criminal justice agencies, in general, are to be only granted access to PA driver photos and detail records. Additional access to driver history, medical information, emergency contact information and vehicle registration information is reserved by PennDOT for criminal justice designated agencies only.

Coroners across the Commonwealth argue however that access to these records can allow them to identify and notify next of kin much quicker, especially in situations involving unclaimed decedents. States such as Ohio and Florida who already successfully provide next of kin options on their state's driver's licenses, can be models for implementing a similar system here in Pennsylvania.

I thank the committee for taking this issue and HB 2088 into consideration.