

**Senate Study Bill 1192 - Introduced**

SENATE FILE \_\_\_\_\_  
BY (PROPOSED COMMITTEE  
ON JUDICIARY BILL BY  
CHAIRPERSON ZAUN)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to medical certification of a suicide on a  
2 death certificate and providing for licensee discipline.  
3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 144.28, Code 2023, is amended to read as  
2 follows:

3 **144.28 Medical certification — licensee discipline.**

4 1. a. For the purposes of **this section**, ~~“nonnatural cause~~  
5 ~~of death”~~:

6 (1) “Nonnatural cause of death” means the death is a  
7 direct or indirect result of physical, chemical, thermal, or  
8 electrical trauma, or drug or alcohol intoxication or other  
9 poisoning, or is a suicide.

10 (2) “Suicide” means the act or instance of intentionally  
11 taking one’s own life.

12 b. Unless there is a nonnatural cause of death, the medical  
13 certification shall be completed and signed by the physician,  
14 physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse practitioner  
15 in charge of the patient’s care for the illness or condition  
16 which resulted in death within seventy-two hours after  
17 receipt of the death certificate from the funeral director or  
18 individual who initially assumes custody of the body.

19 c. (1) If there is a nonnatural cause of death, the county  
20 or state medical examiner shall be notified and shall conduct  
21 an inquiry.

22 (2) If the nonnatural cause of death is determined to be  
23 a suicide, the person completing the medical certification of  
24 cause of death shall do all of the following:

25 (a) List the lethal drug, overdose, or other means of  
26 suicide that caused or contributed to the death among the chain  
27 of events under cause of death or under significant conditions  
28 contributing to death.

29 (b) If a lethal drug, overdose, or other means of suicide is  
30 listed in the chain of events under cause of death, indicate  
31 suicide as the manner of death.

32 d. If the decedent was an infant or child and the cause  
33 of death is not known, a medical examiner’s inquiry shall be  
34 conducted and an autopsy performed as necessary to exclude a  
35 nonnatural cause of death.

1 e. If upon inquiry into a death, the county or state medical  
2 examiner determines that a preexisting natural disease or  
3 condition was the likely cause of death and that the death does  
4 not affect the public interest as described in section 331.802,  
5 subsection 3, the medical examiner may elect to defer to the  
6 physician, physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse  
7 practitioner in charge of the patient's preexisting condition  
8 the certification of the cause of death.

9 f. When an inquiry is required by the county or state  
10 medical examiner, the medical examiner shall investigate  
11 the cause and manner of death and shall complete and sign  
12 the medical certification within seventy-two hours after  
13 determination of the cause and manner of death.

14 2. The person completing the medical certification of cause  
15 of death shall attest to its accuracy either by signature or by  
16 an electronic process approved by rule.

17 3. A person completing the medical certification of cause of  
18 death who knowingly omits listing a lethal drug, overdose, or  
19 other means of suicide or improperly states the manner of death  
20 in violation of this section commits unprofessional conduct and  
21 is subject to licensee discipline by the appropriate licensing  
22 board or department.

23 EXPLANATION

24 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
25 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

26 This bill relates to information regarding suicide in a  
27 medical certification for a nonnatural cause of death.

28 The bill provides that a nonnatural cause of death, in  
29 addition to a death that is a direct or indirect result of  
30 physical, chemical, thermal, or electrical trauma, or drug or  
31 alcohol intoxication or other poisoning, explicitly includes  
32 a suicide. Suicide is defined as the act or instance of  
33 intentionally taking one's own life.

34 Under current law, if there is a nonnatural cause of death,  
35 the county or state medical examiner shall be notified and

1 shall conduct an inquiry. The bill provides that if the  
2 nonnatural cause of death is determined to be a suicide, the  
3 person completing the medical certification of cause of death  
4 shall list the lethal drug, overdose, or other means of suicide  
5 that caused or contributed to the death among the chain of  
6 events under cause of death or under significant conditions  
7 contributing to death; and if a lethal drug, overdose, or other  
8 means of suicide is listed in the chain of events under cause  
9 of death, the person shall indicate suicide as the manner of  
10 death.

11 The bill also provides that a person completing the medical  
12 certification of cause of death who knowingly omits listing a  
13 lethal drug, overdose, or other means of suicide or improperly  
14 states the manner of death in violation of this Code section,  
15 commits unprofessional conduct and is subject to licensee  
16 discipline by the appropriate licensing board or department.