



PRESS RELEASE

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Louisiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report on the Role of Coroners in Involuntary Commitments in Louisiana

The Louisiana Advisory Committee (Committee) to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Commission) has released a [report](#) on the role of coroners in involuntary commitments in Louisiana. Louisiana is currently the only state in the country that allows a medical examiner or coroner to issue an emergency certificate to involuntarily commit a person alleged to be suffering from mental illness.

The Committee received testimony that a majority of Louisiana's parishes have coroners with qualified medical professional backgrounds, but there are instances where there is no qualified medical professional in the role of coroner, potentially leading to inappropriate medical determinations in the coroner's emergency certificate process. Additionally, the Committee is concerned that there is a lack of accountability for decisions made, lack of ability to question or counter decisions made, lack of diligence in assessing mental illness concerns, and a lack of an ability to void or expunge a determination that may have been made in error. These issues have potentially lifelong impacts on the individual who was involuntarily committed.

Among their recommendations, the Committee recommends that Louisiana ensure that a physician, preferably a psychiatrist, is involved in the Coroner's Emergency Certificate process, and also ensure there are appropriate checks and balances that will provide for a qualified individual to assess a potential involuntary commitment case if a local qualified coroner is not immediately available.

Acting Chair Tia Mills said, "We are concerned that involuntary commitments can occur without appropriately qualified medical personnel making the determination that such a deprivation of liberty is warranted. We hope our recommendations help ensure the Coroner's Emergency Certificate is used appropriately and as a tool to help support, and not punish, individuals alleged to be suffering from mental illness."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the 1957 Civil Rights Act, is the only independent, bipartisan federal entity charged with advising the President and the Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement.

Its 56 advisory committees offer broad perspectives on civil rights concerns in their jurisdictions. For more information, please visit www.usccr.gov.