

SPRINGFIELD -- The recent death of hip-hop star Kanye West's mother after cosmetic surgery has lawmakers from Sacramento to Springfield pushing new medical restrictions.

Donda West died in November in the Los Angeles area, a day after undergoing a series of cosmetic operations that included a breast reduction, liposuction and a tummy tuck, according to news accounts. A coroner could not determine her exact cause of death.

The tragedy sparked a firestorm of questions about cosmetic surgery and prompted one Illinois lawmaker to propose a series of stiff new regulations for the profession.

"Illinois has been very lucky in not having any deaths like that, and we want to make sure none occur," said state Rep. Monique Davis, a Chicago Democrat and sponsor of two laws aimed at the plastic surgery community.

One of Davis' proposals -- which could be considered today -- would require that board-certified plastic surgeons perform Botox injections and several other procedures, making it illegal for assistants, other medical staff or even medical doctors outside the plastic surgery specialty to do them.

Davis' other plan requires plastic surgeons be affiliated with an accredited hospital or university in order to practice. Violations could result in felony convictions and prison time.

According to state medical regulators, such medical procedures must be performed or supervised by a licensed physician but not a licensed plastic surgeon.

Cosmetic surgery has been a booming industry in recent years. In 2006, more than 10 million cosmetic procedures were performed nationally, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' most recent statistics. Botox treatments alone have skyrocketed, with more than 4 million treatments in 2006, compared to fewer than 800,000 in 2000.

California, where West's procedures occurred, is also considering tougher laws.

Referred to as the "Donda West Law," a proposal by a California lawmaker would require a health check before a person can undergo cosmetic surgery.

"It's just sad because you have these women going in, and they're just getting butchered," said Yolanda Anderson, Donda West's niece who has pushed the California legislation.

But here in Illinois, Davis' legislation will have an uphill political battle. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons is against the proposals. Dr. Loren Schechter, a society spokesman, said the group was "surprised" by the legislation.

"It's not a matter of us trying to stake our turf. We want what speaks in the best interest of our patients, and we don't think either of those bills did that," Schechter said.

Dr. Steven Sigalove, a plastic surgeon with the Institute of Aesthetic Surgery in Warrenville, said he sees about 30 patients a week for Botox or similar procedures. But he believes some Illinois changes should be made.

"I know for a fact that there are family practitioners and (obstetricians and gynecologists) doing Botox in their office," Sigalove said. "If they do it, they should get training just like anything else."

But he said Davis' plans go too far. He said there are times when a doctor may want to pass a procedure off to an assistant who has done the operation more frequently.

Davis, whose legislation awaits a House committee hearing, acknowledged her plans could change as she meets with opponents and supporters.

"We don't want to hurt a person who really needs to get some work done or something and prevent them from doing it," she said. "However, we do want to have all the protections that Illinois can provide."

Two states, three proposals

In Illinois: Two proposals

- Botox injections and other similar procedures would be required to be performed by board-certified plastic surgeons, not assistants or doctors who don't specialize in plastic surgery
- Plastic surgeons must be affiliated with an accredited hospital or university to open a practice.

Source: Rep. Monique Davis

In California: Assembly Bill 2968, a.k.a. "The Donda West Law"

- Bill would require that any person, prior to undergoing elective cosmetic surgery, have a medical clearance from a licensed physician.
- California state assembly member Wilmer Amina Carter, a Democrat, introduced the bill in February.