



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General of the United States
US Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Barr:

We are writing to you on behalf of forensic science practitioners from across the United States respectfully requesting you to endorse and fully support the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), administered by the National Institute of Justice. NamUs is a crucial tool to the forensic science community, and has suddenly been terminated leaving a serious gap in services with no readily available alternatives in many jurisdictions. NamUs is heavily relied upon by the law enforcement, medicolegal death investigative, and forensic science communities to identify the dead and to solve crimes. NamUs provides for positive identification of the completely unknown, unidentified decedents by searching the NamUs database of missing persons, and also facilitates confirmation of identification by scientific means of those who are tentatively identified, but not visually identifiable.

Specifically, NamUs provides a website that serves as a repository for nationwide case information sharing. The site is utilized as a powerful tool to expedite associations between missing person cases and unidentified human remains discovered throughout the country. Forensic laboratories and investigators routinely begin with this website to determine if DNA, dental records, and fingerprints from remains are available for searching and comparison purposes or whether family member DNA profiles are available for possible DNA comparisons and possible matches to crime scenes or to unidentified remains. Often the NamUs website is the only way that a forensic laboratory knows whether the DNA profile from a set of remains has been uploaded into CODIS, the national DNA database, and whether it has been searched.

Medical examiners and coroners currently rely on NamUs to make identifications in cases where the remains are from victims of fire or are otherwise too decomposed for a visual identification. This includes such events as traffic accidents, buried bodies, house fires, or persons not located before natural decay or environmental factors have interfered to a substantial degree. Decedents must be identified before a death certificate is issued and the remains are released to their families. Medical examiner and/or coroner offices will have to absorb these costs using private laboratories if NamUs can no longer provide these DNA, anthropological, dental, and fingerprint services.

The NamUs Analytical and Case Support Division provides expanded investigative resources on cases reported to NamUs and in its database. Utilizing multiple criminal justice and nongovernmental databases and advanced search techniques, the NamUs analytical team mines relevant information, locates individuals, and vets leads that can be of critical assistance to ongoing investigations. This group of intelligence analysts provide services that many investigative agencies do not possess or have access to, making NamUs their only avenue to acquire the needed information. In addition, NamUs provides case consultations and supports criminal justice efforts to drive missing and unidentified person case resolutions.

For families of the missing, NamUs provides victim services that furnish information and support to individuals and families impacted by the loss or disappearance of a loved one. The NamUs website provides an avenue for them to search for their missing loved ones within the database of unidentified remains. Families may search by many variables including gender, race, height, physical descriptors, jewelry or clothing, associated vehicles, etc. NamUs

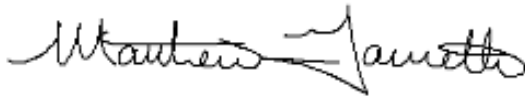
Victims Services provides educational materials, resource referrals for related support groups and mental health care along with peer networking to connect families with trained volunteers, who may provide guidance and support based on shared experiences. NamUs also provides reunification services to return deceased loved ones home, including support with exhumations, transportation, and re-interment.

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) was formed in 2000 and is comprised of the six major forensic science professional organizations: American Academy of Forensic Sciences; American Society of Crime Lab Directors; International Association for Identification; American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law; National Association of Medical Examiners; and Society of Forensic Toxicologists - American Board of Forensic Toxicology. The CFSO membership collectively represents more than 21,000 forensic science service providers across the United States.

General Barr, the forensic science and medicolegal community is already critically strained due to a chronic shortage of funding and personnel, and case backlogs, exacerbated by the on-going opioid crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Discontinuing a tool as crucial as NamUs will severely impede if not eliminate our ability to identify decedents, bring these cases to closure, and thus serve their families and the interests of justice in a timely manner. We urge you to find a speedy resolution to the current situation that will allow the services of NamUs to continue uninterrupted. We appreciate your support and that of the DOJ for forensic science and forensic science practitioners in this country.

Cc: Senate Judiciary Committee
House Judiciary Committee

Society of Forensic Toxicologists



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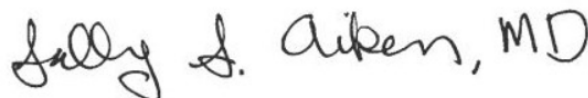
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