



*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 Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
States House of Representatives
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies United
States House of Representatives
1203 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Shaheen, Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt:

We are writing today to request your support for the needs of the forensic science community in the FY21 budget. Specifically, please fully fund:

- 1) The Paul Coverdell Forensic Sciences Improvement Grants at the authorized level of \$23 million, combined with the funds for drug policy to equal \$33 million. Importantly, we ask that the funding above the authorization level should be for “drugs of abuse” rather than just “opioids” due to emerging drugs and evolving drug problems;
- 2) A NIST grant program in the Special Programs Office in the amount of \$1 million for accredited Forensic Science Standards Developing Organizations;
- 3) NIST’s Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) at \$4 million;
- 4) The DNA grants at existing, authorized levels.

The tools in forensic science have become invaluable to our nation’s criminal justice system to both identify and convict the guilty as well as exonerate the innocent. The recent Department of Justice report to Congress entitled “Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices” states that a 2017 analysis of a subset of publicly funded, accredited laboratories estimates that forensic laboratories nationwide would require an additional \$640 million annually to reach an optimal balance between incoming laboratory requests and casework reported. It further stated that in 2015 there was an estimated additional shortage of \$270 million needed by Medical Examiners/Coroner offices as a result of the opioid crisis that has only grown and continues to increase since then. Now, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic is adding additional needs on the Medical Examiner/Coroner offices across the country that are performing the autopsies and temporarily storing decedents. They require the same virus diagnostic and protective equipment as other first responders and medical personnel.

The above-mentioned programs are critically important in assisting forensic science service providers, including Medical Examiners and Coroners, to meet present demands while coping with the increasing demands for their services in supporting our criminal justice system.

The Paul Coverdell Forensic Sciences Grants are the primary source of non-DNA grants to publicly funded forensic science service providers. With the increasing introduction of new technologies, in addition to the ever-increasing demands for services, laboratories must purchase new equipment or at a minimum update present equipment, hire and train new examiners, train existing examiners on new equipment and technologies, and validate the new equipment. In order to meet the needs of the law enforcement and legal communities and be responsive to the needs and concerns of victims of crime and their families, adequate funding is crucial.

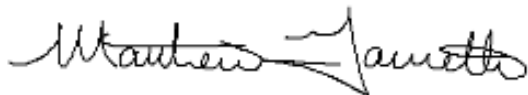
The NIST Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) is directly the result of the 2009 National Academy's study concerning the validity and reliability of forensic science. Standards for methods of examination in forensic science provider laboratories are essential for the validity and reliability of analyses carried out in crime laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner offices. The standards placed on the OSAC registry are thoroughly vetted through the entire stakeholder community. The standards are not only important for reliability and validity, but for consistency in the application of scientific methods around the country.

Standards Developing Organizations (SDOs) are an integral part of the standards setting process that begins in many instances with the OSAC membership. Accredited SDOs open the review process to all stakeholders in the forensic community and are essential for the creation of standards for placement on the OSAC registry. The universal adoption and maximum impact of these standards is only achieved if they are available to all stakeholders at no cost. To support such a process, non-profit forensic science SDOs require federal funding to achieve and maintain their accreditation and generate forensic science standards without the revenue from the sale of the standards. Grants for these accredited forensic science SDOs are essential to accomplish this task.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue plaguing our criminal justice system and the stakeholder community it serves. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Beth Lavach at 703-622-8752.

Sincerely,

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations



Matthew Gamette M.S., C.P.M.
Chair,
Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations



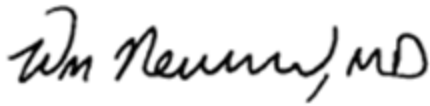
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