

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations represents over 21,000 forensic practitioners. I am speaking to you today as the Vice-Chair of CFSO and a BOD member of IAI. The CFSO organizations have been and continue to be some of the most outspoken advocates of recognized universal accreditation of forensic science service providers and forensic medico-legal death services providers. CFSO members were the earliest adopters of accreditation principles

Recently Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates announced that the Justice Department will require DOJ-run forensic labs to obtain and maintain accreditation and require all department prosecutors to use accredited labs to process forensic evidence when practicable. Most large crime laboratories and medico-legal death investigator offices in the United States are accredited but many are not. The primary reason for not pursuing accreditation is due only to a lack of resources. Accreditation demands the commitment of resources that are not available to many forensic service providers. CFSO has asked that DOJ make a financial commitment in the form of granting programs to assist all public forensic service providers not only obtain but to maintain the appropriate accreditations.

While no specific fund exists to prepare for and maintain accreditation, the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science grants can be used to support accreditation efforts by forensic service providers and medicolegal death investigator offices. In fact, Coverdell grants are the only funds in the nation that provide the state, county, tribal, and local forensic service provider community a source of funding for over 90% of the disciplines within the forensic service provider community. They are also the only funds available for the medical examiner/coroner community. As you know, the amount of physical evidence submitted to the nation's crime labs is increasing at an exponential rate. However, the President's budget request for FY17 did not contain any funds for Coverdell and in fact requested a rescission of the previous year's Coverdell funding. Congress thankfully has, at our request, supported the funding in a bipartisan and bicameral way. However, the appropriation amounts are not enough to make a serious impact on those forensic service providers seeking accreditation not to mention those already accredited seeking to maintain their accreditation. We would appreciate the support of this Commission to continue to urge DOJ to openly express support to Congress for funding for state, county, tribal, and local forensic service providers and to support our request to Congress.

In closing, we also urge this Commission to understand that as each recommendation comes forward supported by the Attorney General, it will require the necessary resources to implement them. Please join us in achieving universal accreditation along with future recommendations supported by the Attorney General in recommending an accompanying budget whereby the necessary funding is included in the DOJ budget request to congress.

Thank you