



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

June 18, 2021

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
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 Chairwoman Shaheen, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Cartwright and Ranking Member Aderholt:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) and the 20,000 forensic science practitioners that CFSO represents to request funding increases and language in critical programs not addressed in the President's Budget. Specifically, we request funding be increased for Firearms Examiner Training and Standards Development. We also request that funding requested in the President's Budget for the DNA Initiative, the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Grants Program, NamUs and OSAC be kept at the level of, or increased above, the President's request. Finally, we request that language be included regarding the implementation of the FY19 Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices sent to Congress in February 2020.

Our member organizations, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, the International Association for Identification, the National Association of Medical Examiners, the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, and the American Board of Forensic Toxicology represent almost the entirety of the forensic science practitioner community. As such, we look forward to working with you and your staff to continue to advance forensic science and ensure that the nation's forensic science infrastructure has the appropriate resources to provide a continuous, timely and reliable product so invaluable to our nation's legal system for both identifying and convicting the guilty and exonerating the innocent.

We request that you fund the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Grants Program, the DNA grants and the NIST OSAC at the levels requested in the President's budget or above those levels. The forensic science community has been hit very hard by the opioid crisis and an increase in violent crime. As such, our backlogs in firearms cases have increased dramatically. We would request that you expedite the request from ATF to build a firearms examiner training center from FY23 to FY22. Included with this letter is a white paper to justify and demonstrate the strong need for this funding to be expedited. We would also request that \$2m be added to fund Standards Development Organizations (SDOs) so that they can develop and disseminate as National Standards, without charge, the proposed standards and best practices produced for forensic science by the NIST Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC). Without this funding for SDOs, the OSAC's purposes and goals are frustrated and incomplete. This funding would help ensure that national scientific standards would be transparent and cost-free to the laboratories, officers of the court, and research scientists.

Finally, in 2019, the National Institute of Justice published the Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices Report to Congress. That report concludes there is insufficient funding to process the ever-increasing amounts of forensic evidence. It further states “the state, county, local and tribal crime laboratories including medical examiner/coroner offices have a \$640 million deficit for normal operations, but the increase of current opioid expenditures adds another \$270 million to that cost.” The report goes on to state that there must be not only an increase in funding but improvements in the personnel pipeline, the institutionalization of systems-based communication, and strategic planning to address the matters of funding, current backlogs, ever increasing caseloads, workforce challenges, and continuing education. This has been further exacerbated by COVID.

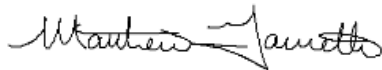
We strongly believe that these findings require a shift in how the Department of Justice approaches forensic science. Specifically, we request that the following language be included in the FY22 budget:

The Committee understands that based on the 2019 Report to Congress from the National Institute of Justice titled “Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices,” the nation’s crime laboratories and medical examiner offices continue to face significant barriers that prevent them from having the necessary capacity to address not only their existing workload, but also surges in casework resulting from such matters as the opioid epidemic and COVID-19. Despite the information provided in this report, and feedback from the state and local community, our nation’s crime labs and medical examiners, the Department of Justice continues to not provide significant funding to address these issues. Nor has a plan been presented to Congress on how to address the matters presented in this report. Therefore, the committee directs the Attorney General to provide a plan to Congress no later than 6 months from the date of enactment as to how it will address the shortfalls in personnel, equipment and training for our nation’s forensic science professionals.

These 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 the criminal justice system.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and if you should have questions, you can reach Beth Lavach at 703-622-8752.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.



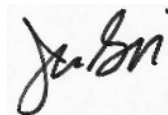
Matthew Gamette M.S., C.P.M.
CFSO Chair



Kenneth B. Zercie
President,
International Association for Identification

Laura C. Fulginiti, PhD, D-ABFA

Laura C. Fulginiti, PhD
President-Elect
American Academy of Forensic Sciences



James Gill, MD
President,
National Association of Medical Examiners



Dr. Bruce A. Goldberger PhD, F-ABFT
President,
American Board of Forensic Toxicology



Amy Miles
President,
Society of Forensic Toxicologists



Erin P. Forry M.S.
President,
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors