



*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*

January 28, 2022

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

Dear Attorney General Garland:

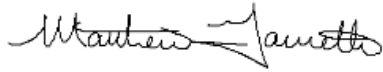
We are writing to you on behalf of the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) and the 20,000 forensic science practitioners that CFSO represents. Our member organizations listed on our letterhead represent almost the entirety of the forensic science practitioner community. As such, we look 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 are writing to urge that you significantly increase funding for forensic programs in the Department of Justice, specifically the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Grants, NamUs, CEBR, SAKI, Research and Development in Forensic Science, Prosecuting Cold Cases Using DNA, and Strengthening the Medical Examiner/Coroner System. A recent report from the NIJ initiated FORESIGHT program at West Virginia University School of Business indicates a substantial growth in backlogs among the nation's crime labs. For instance, the average annual growth in backlog in the United States from 2013 to 2020 was 190.3% in blood alcohol, 628.6% in Crime Scene Investigation, 88.5% in fingerprints, 110.3% in toxicology, and 50% in firearms. States recently surveyed by our organization provided data to support increased firearms case submissions between 18% and 154% in the last few years. The Medical Examiner community is also struggling with an astronomical increase in cases due to the opioid crisis and COVID cases. This is not a surprise to the community, and it is consistent with the 2019 National Institute of Justice publication of 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.

These problems are further exasperated by a shortage of personnel in many of our disciplines that have long relied on the pipeline of trained individuals from our federal laboratory system. Our laboratories across the country are seeing significant shortages in firearms examiners and DNA analysts. Our medical examiner community has a shortfall of at least 1,100 to 1,200 forensic pathologists to meet current needs according to recent estimates. As you develop the FY23 budget, we would request that you take these matters into consideration.

On behalf of the Consortium members, we thank you for your attention to these critical issues in our criminal justice system and the stakeholder community it serves.

Sincerely,



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CFSO Chair

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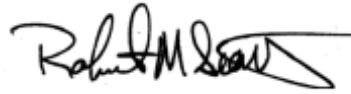
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