



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Washington, D.C. 20531

April 19, 2010

Kelly A. Walsh, D-ABC, Research Associate I
Justice Policy Center
Urban Institute
2100 M St. NW
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Ms. Walsh:

RE: Letter of Support for the 2009 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences (OIFS) within the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to express our strong support for the 2009 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories. This data collection effort is an excellent mechanism to gather information from publicly funded crime laboratories throughout the United States. The data that was gathered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2002 and 2005 has been invaluable at all levels of government and is frequently used to support decisions regarding forensic laboratory practices, policy, and funding.

On February 18, 2009, the National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, published, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. The report contains 13 recommendations designed, in the committee's opinion, to remove or ameliorate systemic weaknesses in the forensic sciences. In addition to this high profile report, forensic laboratories throughout the country are hampered by practical concerns about laboratory capacity, insufficient funding, and a scarcity of appropriately trained personnel. As a result, there has been a great deal of attention from law makers, legislatures, and the criminal justice community to address these concerns. Therefore, the data collected in the 2009 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories will be a current resource that decision makers at all levels of government can use.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael G. Sheppo", is written over a horizontal line.

Michael G. Sheppo
Director
Office of Investigative
and Forensic Sciences