



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

TESTIMONY

Statement of

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**Co-Chair, Forensic Science Committee
International Association of Chiefs of Police**

Before the

Committee on the Judiciary

United States Senate

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Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stephanie Stoiloff and I serve as the Commander of the Forensic Services Bureau for the Miami-Dade Police Department in Miami, Florida. I also serve as the co-chair of the Forensic Science Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and I am here today on behalf of the IACP, representing over 22,000 law enforcement executives in over 100 countries throughout the world. In the United States there are over 18,000 state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies and over 800,000 state, local, and tribal law enforcement officers. I am pleased to be here this morning to discuss the challenges currently confronting the forensic science community within the United States and the need for further resources and support of forensic science within the law enforcement community.

In February 2009, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report entitled, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. In January 2011, legislation was proposed to address some of the topics discussed in this report. The IACP, the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) and the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies (ASCIA) each have Forensic Committees comprised of law enforcement executives, laboratory directors and private sector representatives from across the nation. The IACP Forensic Committee collaborated with the Forensic Committees from the MCCA and the ASCIA, as well as members of the National Sheriff's Association (NSA) to discuss some concerns with the proposed legislation. Collectively, we appreciate that Senator Leahy and his staff recognize that the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders are a critical component of this legislation. This collaboration has been a positive process that has enabled the concerns of the state and local agencies to be heard. Over the past thirty years, the forensic science community has voluntarily established internationally recognized laboratory accreditation and professional certification programs. Law enforcement agencies have made considerable financial investments to support this voluntary accreditation, a program defined by the implementation and maintenance of rigorous quality assurance standards, in over 400 crime laboratories nationwide. The importance of forensic science to the investigation of

a crime has police chiefs nationwide asking how we can better use these forensic resources and, further, *how do we ensure scientific integrity?* Forensic science is not the floundering profession that some may portray it to be. As with any scientific discipline, there is a perpetual need for support, improvement, and advancement. In fact, many of the improvements in forensic science have resulted from the commitment of law enforcement agencies and their executive leadership to sound forensic practices. In the last two years, although many collaborations have been developed to address the recommendations brought forth in the NAS report, there are still several important concerns that need to be addressed.

The first—and greatest—need is funding: the forensic community needs funding to perform the work conducted nationwide every day. The common question asked is, “How much funding is needed?” \$1 billion was allocated to address DNA backlogs. That is, \$1 billion was allocated *for one discipline* that still is not able to completely manage the flood of evidence submitted for analysis. The analysis itself is expensive. Have we now put a price on public safety? How much funding can Congress allocate? \$1 billion *per forensic discipline* would not be enough to address the need for accreditation, certification, research, education and analysis. The forensic community itself requested the NAS report to be written to address the resource needs of forensic service providers. We know what the problem is; the question is: "What is going to be done about it?"

The second need is leadership. The forensic community needs strong national leadership with the understanding that one size does not fit all. The needs of federal, state and local agencies are separate and distinct from each other. Our agencies and their forensic laboratories are at ground zero in the fight on crime. Most of these organizations have higher demands for service and fewer resources available with which to wage that fight as compared to the larger state and federal laboratories. Our agencies agree that all forensic service providers including stand-alone forensic units such as latent prints and crime scene units should follow quality standards and attain accreditation. Further, our agencies also agree that each forensic science discipline should have a competency/certification program and each forensic scientist must demonstrate

competency in their discipline. The chief executives that the IACP, MCC and ASCIA represent have the ultimate responsibility to ensure accurate and efficient delivery of forensic services. Strong national leadership can provide a comprehensive plan to incrementally introduce and implement the funding and other resources necessary to fulfill these goals.

Third, there is a need for additional higher education programs in forensic science and the funding to support them. While forensic science has attracted nationwide attention, partially as the result of television portrayals of crime scene investigation, little funding has been funneled into higher education for forensic scientists. A common misperception is that forensic science is not a *science*. By definition, forensic science is the application of scientific knowledge and methodology to legal problems and criminal investigations. By its very nature, science is about new testing, new technology and new applications of technology: "How can we do what we do every day and do it better?" New advances occur every day within universities nationwide. More higher education programs and internships in forensic science should be established to assist the forensic science community. Forensic initiatives such as Pennsylvania State University, West Virginia University, the International Forensic Research Institute at the Florida International University, and the Marshall University Forensic Science Center are examples of successful higher education programs in forensic science. Forensic science research programs and educational opportunities support the investigations conducted daily by public safety agencies nationwide to protect its citizens and make communities safer.

In closing, federal, state, tribal and local law enforcement are utilizing every possible resource to provide public safety. The law enforcement community appreciates the opportunity to work with Senator Leahy and his staff to develop a workable solution that supports the needs of the forensic science community. These comprehensive discussions have covered all aspects of forensic science, including the incredible advances that have been realized in the recent past, the limitations of many historical procedures, opportunities for continued advancement, and the differences between theory, pop-fiction, and real forensic evidence. It is our hope that these open discussions will

continue, allowing everyone to accomplish the goal of providing the framework and resources necessary to maintain our existing capabilities and develop new technologies for the future.

Thank you.