

February 2, 2018

Honorable Senator Christine Rolfes
Honorable Representative Timm Ormsby
Washington State Legislature
Olympia, Washington

Dear Senator Rolfes and Representative Ormsby,

The Clark County Council strongly supports the Washington State Toxicology Laboratory's 2018 supplemental operating budget request of approximately \$2.4 million for additional personnel to address the significant backlog at the state toxicology lab. Funding for this request will show the state's commitment to our law enforcement officers, prosecuting attorneys, medical examiners, and to families that have lost loved ones. This appropriation will demonstrate the state's dedication to our forensic sciences.

The state toxicology lab, under the supervision of the Washington State Patrol, conducts all of the testing of blood taken for DUI, vehicular homicide, and vehicular assault cases. The toxicology lab also processes the blood tests for death investigations conducted by medical examiners and coroners. The toxicology lab serves the entirety of Washington state.

In recent years, the toxicology lab caseload has increased dramatically without a corresponding increase in personnel to process the samples. There has been a 22% increase in DUI cases at the toxicology lab from 2015 to 2017. This is due in large part to the legalization of marijuana. In addition to the caseload increase, complexity of death investigation cases has increased due to the opioid crisis and the increased number of drugs present per case. The median time to complete toxicology testing has increased from 16-18 days in years past to approximately 74 days today.

The current backlog of cases is unacceptable. Law enforcement and prosecutors are left waiting while witnesses and evidence becomes increasingly stale. Families are waiting for closure regarding the cause of death of a loved one. Insurance companies are refusing to provide benefits due to the delay. Medical examiners are risking losing their accreditation due to the delay. We urge you to address this problem by appropriating the \$2.4 million budget request in the 2018 supplemental operating budget.

Thank you for your consideration of this budget request.

Sincerely,

Marc Boldt
Clark County Council Chair

John Blom
Clark County Council

Julie Olson
Clark County Council
Forensic Investigations Council

Eileen Quiring
Clark County Council

Jeanne Stewart
Clark County Council

cc: Honorable Senator John Braun
Honorable Senator Annette Cleveland
Honorable Senator Curtis King
Honorable Senator Ann Rivers
Honorable Senator Lynda Wilson
Honorable Representative Richard DeBolt
Honorable Representative Paul Harris
Honorable Representative Norm Johnson
Honorable Representative Vicki Kraft
Honorable Representative Gina McCabe
Honorable Representative Ed Orcutt
Honorable Representative Liz Pike
Honorable Representative Monica Stonier
Honorable Representative Brandon Vick
Honorable Representative Sharon Wylie
David McEachran, Chairman of the Forensic Investigations Council