

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

We write to express our strong support for the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program which helps law enforcement and forensic labs keep up with the increasing demand for DNA analysis. We request that you provide sufficient funding in FY 2017 for vital DNA-related and forensic programs, including the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program, the Kirk Bloodsworth Post Conviction DNA Testing Program, and Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Program Grants.

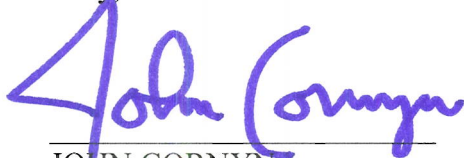
Since the program was first authorized in 2004, the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program has given states the help and resources they desperately need, and continue to need, to carry out DNA analyses of backlogged evidence, particularly rape kits. It has provided a strong starting point in addressing this serious problem, but much work still remains to be done before we clear the national backlog of untested DNA crime scene evidence and offender profiles.

Crime laboratories have made tremendous progress towards increasing the number of DNA cases that can be processed. Unfortunately, forensic DNA is a victim of its own success – as more cases are solved using DNA, law enforcement has asked for even more DNA testing in a more cases. Any decrease in this vital funding for forensic DNA analysis will lead to considerable strain on crime labs as backlogs will grow to unprecedented levels, with impacts that will resound throughout the criminal justice system.

Your subcommittee has long recognized the importance of the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant and other vital DNA-related forensic programs, and the funding you have appropriated has aided thousands of cases and had a tremendously positive effect on public safety. We strongly urge you to again provide sufficient funding for these critical programs.

We appreciate your commitment to solving and preventing violent crime and protecting victims of crime, and we thank you for your commitment to continued funding to maximize the use of DNA to solve crime.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



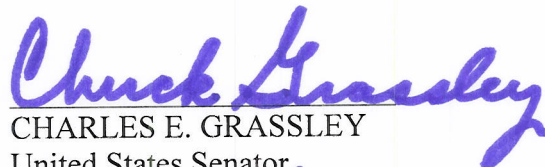
DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator



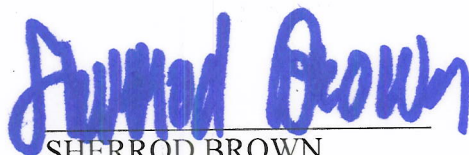
MITCH MCCONNELL
United States Senator



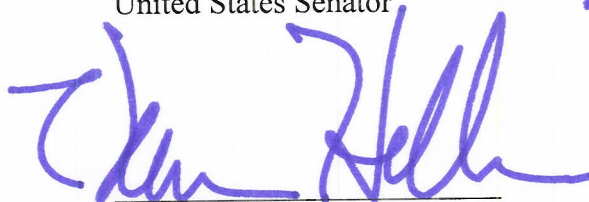
GARY PETERS
United States Senator



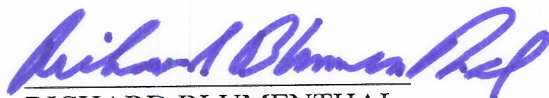
CHARLES E. GRASSLEY
United States Senator




SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator



DEAN HELLER
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



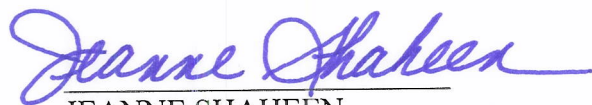
KELLY A. AYOTTE
United States Senator



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator



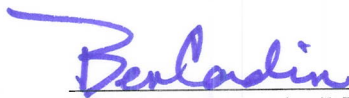
THOM TILLIS
United States Senator



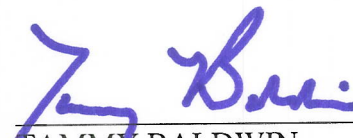
JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator



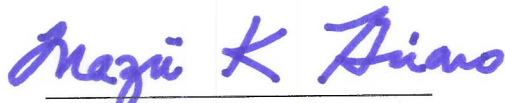
JACK REED
United States Senator



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator



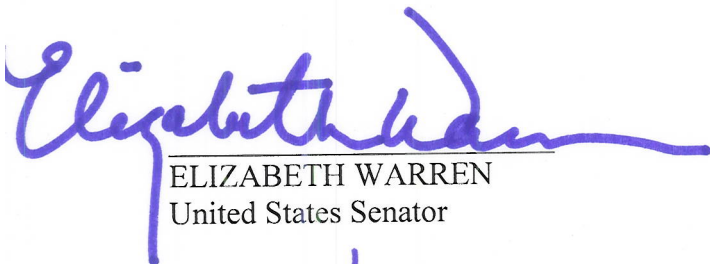
TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator



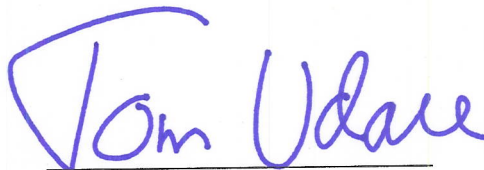
MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



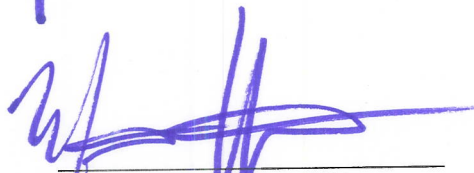
RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator



ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



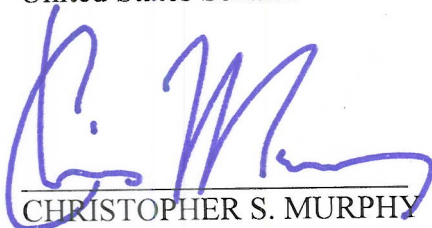
TOM UDALL
United States Senator



MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator



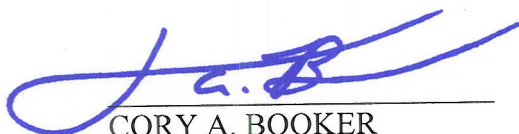
ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



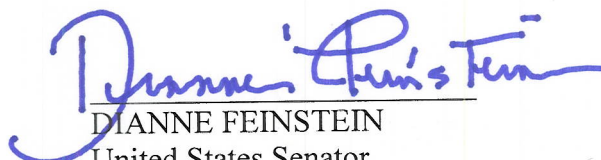
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CORY A. BOOKER
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United States Senator



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator

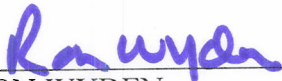


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United States Senator

MICHAEL F. BENNET
United States Senator

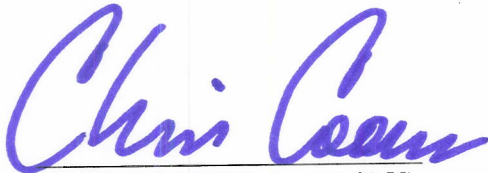
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RON WYDEN
United States Senator



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CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senator



MARK R. WARNER
United States Senator