

15 November 2023

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Transmitted via email to the Executive Office of the Mayor – eom@dc.gov

Re: Resignation from the Department of Forensic Sciences Science Advisory Board

Dear Mayor Bowser:

It is with deep regret that I resign from my position on the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Science Advisory Board (SAB). Dr. Pentella and Dr. Swofford were dismissed from the SAB today with a telephone call after being assured by MOTA that their continued service on the SAB was welcome. This appears to be blatant retaliation by the DFS for issues the SAB raised at our 19 OCT open meeting.

Such retribution cannot be condoned. These “firings” are simply the latest example of the DFS leadership abusing its authority. It is not possible to effectively serve on the SAB with the repeated systemic failure by the DFS to comply with the letter and intent of enabling legislation, D.C. Act 19-89 enacted June 24, 2011.

The DFS refusal to engage collegially and constructively prevents the SAB from fulfilling its mission. Dr. Jeanne Jordan, the SAB Chair, provided examples of the DFS conduct to the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee Director on 18 October.

Several other examples to note are: 1) The SAB is not provided “training manuals and standard operating procedures” prior to adoption, as required under Section 5. 2) Requests for forensic accreditation information have been refused, yet “all accreditation documents” are public information per Section 7; and 3) The SAB has been prevented from carrying out its advisory functions under Section 13 since the DFS does not provide information about “new scientific programs, protocols, [or] methods of testing” to the SAB consistently.

It is disheartening the DFS makes no concerted effort to comply with requirements, nor seeks to meet the spirit, in the enabling legislation. This not only undermines the purpose of the advisory board, but also erodes trust and confidence, leading me to ask what information is not being disclosed, and why, to an advisory board intended to support the DFS scientific missions. This lack of interaction with the SAB creates the perception that the Laboratory does not want an advisory body.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Science Advisory Board. I hope my resignation can act as a catalyst to improve how the DFS engages with the SAB, and leads to the DFS ability to work in partnership with future advisory boards. I, and all my fellow SAB members, volunteered in order to provide input and advice to the DFS that would benefit the forensic science and public health missions.

Sincerely,



Richard E. Tontarski Jr.

cc.

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