

performed in forensic laboratories. Experience and daily observation should not be discounted since the accumulation of training, testing and experience adds to the empirical knowledge of our particular discipline. Medical Doctors are not "proficiency tested" in their ability to diagnose the common cold, or even cancer; instead they rely on their experience and training. Moreover, where PCAST suggests "a forensic examiner's 'experience' from extensive casework is not informative—because the 'right answers' are not typically known", we would posit that when a physician diagnoses the common cold, the right answer is "not known" either but he or she is relying heavily on experience (as well as other factors, seasonal, etc.).

MAFS strongly disagrees with the characterization that the "forensic community prefers that tests not be too challenging". This is an assertion based on one comment, and an opinion at that, by one president, from one test provider. This report is fraught with rhetoric about rigorous research, reproducibility, repeatability, etc. and it appears contradictory and careless to make such a hyperbolic statement based upon one person's opinion.

Regarding funding, we again agree with the PCAST report that in order to move forward with their suggestions to strengthen the science, more funding is needed; however, we disagree with their specific recommendations. PCAST recommends \$4 million to support efforts to make methods "established as foundationally valid" which is predominately what the entire report is about; on this we marginally agree; however, then PCAST recommends "\$10 million to support increased research activities in forensic science, including on complex DNA mixtures, latent fingerprints, voice/speaker recognition, and face/iris biometrics." With all due respect to the DNA community, a considerable amount of funding is already available through the current DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction (CEBR) Program. Perhaps the more egregious recommendation regarding funding is that of voice/speaker recognition, and face/iris biometrics. We find it puzzling to suggest funding for voice/speaker recognition, and face/iris biometrics when neither technology is mentioned as a concern in this report. We assert that the funding should go to research in the forensic science disciplines that are in fact the cause of the concern.

Lastly, with regard to many of the recommendations, for example establishing foundational validity and proficiency testing, PCAST recommends the involvement of independent scientists without direct forensic science experience or as stated in the report "which has no stake in the outcome". Where we would welcome more involvement from the academic community, statisticians, etc. and believe their involvement can only strengthen our science, we all know that science is about collaboration, discussion and debate. To not include practitioners in the discussion would be irresponsible.

Although we may disagree on many points that the PCAST report makes, the Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists would like to thank PCAST for its work. We understand that the undertaking was immense and that we are not always going to agree, but we do stand united and ready to strengthen our science whenever and wherever the opportunity arises.