



Boston City Council
ED FLYNN
Councillor - District 2

April 30, 2024

Michael Cox, Commissioner
Boston Police Department
1 Schroeder Plaza
Boston, MA 02120

Re: Boston Police Crime Laboratory

Dear Commissioner Cox:

I'm writing to express my concerns over the staffing shortage at the Boston Police Crime Laboratory, and to advocate for more resources for this important office. As you know, the Crime Lab is currently not meeting the state mandated deadline of testing sexual assault kits within 30 days, is not using the most advanced DNA testing technology, and is facing a void in leadership that negatively impacts the operations of the lab. The Crime Lab's work in processing, examining, and analyzing evidence, such as sexual assault kits, is indispensable to the investigation and solving crimes, but it is now facing urgent challenges. I urge the Boston Police Department to expeditiously address these issues, and to ensure that the Boston Police Crime Laboratory has the appropriate resources to function smoothly.

In 2018, the state legislature mandated that sexual assault kits be tested within 30 days, in order to ensure swift processing of evidence that will bring justice for sexual assault survivors. At the City Council hearing that I sponsored last week to discuss resources for the Boston Crime Lab, we learn that testing sexual assault kits within 30 days is very difficult for the Crime Lab due to staffing shortage. We also learned that the Crime Lab is currently without a director, as the current director is out on leave since August of 2022, and various people had to step in as interim director in the meantime. The staffing shortage and absentee director not only hinder the operations of the Crime Lab, but it also hurts the morale of the staff. As I have stressed in the hearing, it is critical that we have a director for the Crime Lab who is responsible and accountable to this office, and addressing this should be a top priority for the Boston Police Department.

Moreover, we learn that the Boston Crime Lab is not using "Y screening", a DNA testing technique that is utilized by the Massachusetts State Police Crime Lab, and is understood to be a

quicker and more efficient method of DNA testing. Panelists from the Crime Lab indicated that they would be open to using this method, but it would require significant budget increase. I urge also that the Crime Lab consider using Y screening that will help them improve processing turnaround time, and that BPD provide the Crime Lab the necessary resources to allow them to use new and advanced technology.

I hope that BPD addresses the staffing shortage, absentee leadership, outdated technology, and other challenges that the Boston Crime Lab faces, so that sexual assault kits will be tested within 30 days, and that survivors of sexual assault can see justice swiftly. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 617-635-3203, or at Ed.Flynn@Boston.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Flynn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Ed Flynn

Boston City Councilor, District 2