



## STATE OF WASHINGTON

December 9, 2024

Honorable Pat McCarthy  
Washington State Auditor  
P.O. Box 40021  
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor McCarthy:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the State Auditor's Office performance audit report, "*Washington State Patrol Sexual Assault Kits Follow-up*." The Washington State Patrol (WSP) is pleased with the work of its Crime Laboratory Division in addressing the backlog of sexual assault kits. We appreciate the SAO acknowledging the progress made.

The impact of the global pandemic on the WSP's ability to meet initial goals for reducing the backlog should not be understated. The pandemic affected the hiring, training, and deployment of personnel tasked in backlog reduction efforts. It also disrupted independent labs handling older kits, vendors involved with lab expansion, and new equipment delivery and validation. In short, the pandemic slowed down all aspects of the strategy to reduce the backlog through science collaboration, increased capacity, and improved logistics.

Furthermore, the WSP provides DNA test results for newly submitted sexual assault kits to law enforcement partners within an average of 40 days.<sup>1</sup> Most of the sexual assault kits can be processed within 45 days. However, there will always be a small percentage of kits that are more complex and cannot be completed within 45 days without sacrificing due diligence and the pursuit of thorough, quality forensic DNA testing results.

The WSP remains committed to providing high-quality, timely DNA testing of sexual assault kits as part of its forensic DNA testing program. As of November 19, 2024, the WSP has further reduced the backlog and only 12 historical kits remain. The WSP expects to finish testing of these kits in the next few weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John R. Batiste".

Chief John R. Batiste  
Washington State Patrol

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Sullivan".

Pat Sullivan, Director  
Office of Financial Management

cc: Joby Shimomura, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
Kelly Wicker, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
Rob Duff, Executive Director of Policy and Outreach, Office of the Governor  
Mandeep Kaundal, Director, Results Washington, Office of the Governor  
Tammy Firkins, Performance Audit Liaison, Results Washington, Office of the Governor  
Scott Frank, Director of Performance Audit, Office of the Washington State Auditor

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<sup>1</sup> The average is based on sexual assault kits completed in 2024 through October 31, 2024.