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The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Robert F. Kennedy Building  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Office of Justice Programs' (OJP) Science Advisory Board (SAB), which you established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act in November 2010. Since early 2011, the SAB has been meeting semi-annually, with its most recent meeting held in conjunction with the National Institute of Justice conference in June 2012.

During these first two years, the SAB and its six subcommittees have chosen to spend the majority of time educating themselves about the agency's programs and activities so best to provide OJP with valuable scientific and educational advice. While, in the short run, the Board sees its primary role as enhancing the overall impact and performance of OJP's programs and activities in the areas of criminal and juvenile justice, the longer-term goal—and most important role for the SAB—is protecting and ensuring the scientific quality and integrity of the agency. As you put it so well when you addressed us at our first meeting, we recognize the importance of “infusing science into the DNA of the Department.”

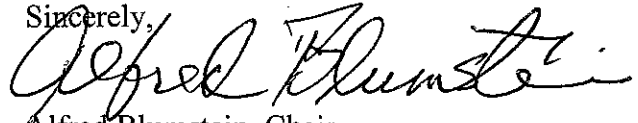
In this regard, we are pleased that the latest draft of the Department of Justice's Scientific and Research Integrity Policy posted on the DOJ website appropriately recognizes the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) as “science agencies,” and throughout includes provisions to protect the autonomy and independence of these two components. We particularly applaud the inclusion of language that states that the NIJ and BJS research and statistics programs and other activities, as well as dissemination of findings, be shielded from political or other similar influences. We also commend the language reflecting the vital need to promote the professional development of research scientists.

In furthering the goals of the DOJ policy, we recommend that you issue additional guidance that will ensure that all future NIJ and BJS Directors be selected based on strong scientific credentials as reflected in nominations elicited from the OJP SAB, as well as from a broad range of scientific and stakeholder organizations in the criminal justice field. Another area of importance includes having the Attorney General issue guidance that would ensure the fairness and transparency of all NIJ and BJS funding decisions.

Going forward, the SAB looks to provide OJP and the Department with additional recommendations that will preserve, protect and promote scientific principles within the culture of OJP so that scientific integrity will be retained across all Administrations.

Thank you very much for your leadership in this area, and we hope that you will find an opportunity to meet with us again at a future SAB meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alfred Blumstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alfred" being particularly prominent.

Alfred Blumstein, Chair  
Office of Justice Programs  
Science Advisory Board

Cc: SAB membership  
Mary Lou Leary