



32 West 22nd Street, 4th Floor
New York, New York 10010
(212) 475-2026
joyfulheartfoundation.org

Board of Directors:

May 5, 2017

Mariska Hargitay
Founder & President

Executive Deputy Commissioner Michael C. Green, Esq.
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Chairperson, New York State Commission on Forensic Science
Alfred E. Smith State Office Building
80 South Swan St.
Albany, New York 12210

Christina Norman
Chair

Sukey Novogratz
Vice Chair

Karen Polivka
Treasurer

Jessica Ambrose

Dear Executive Deputy Commissioner Green,

Beth Armstrong

Durk Barnhill

Jenny Belushi

Shanna Brooks

Jill Eisenstadt-Chayot

Michele Dominick

Linda Fairstein

Erica Fisher

Peter Hermann

Danielle Herzlich

Mark Herzlich

The Joyful Heart Foundation works in New York and across the country in service of our mission to transform society's response to sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. We urge the Commission on Forensic Science to authorize the use of familial searching of New York State data banks. This technology has the potential to identify unknown perpetrators, offer a path to justice to survivors of violent crimes, and strengthen public safety for all New Yorkers.

Since 2010, the Joyful Heart Foundation has made the elimination of the rape kit backlog nationwide a top priority. We work to ensure that all rape kits are tested because, when tested, DNA evidence collected in rape kits can identify unknown offenders, link crime scenes together, confirm known suspects, and exonerate the innocent. **We understand the power of DNA and DNA technology to solve and prevent crime.**

Valli Kalei Kanuha, Ph.D.

Michael King

Andrea McTamaney

Rev. Al Miles

Debbie Millman

Heather Mnuchin

Tom Nunan

Chauncey Parker

Stanley Schneider

Andrew Schwartzberg

Carrie Shumway

Amanda Stephens

Noelle Wolf

Maile M. Zambuto
Chief Executive Officer

Familial searching of DNA databanks is an important innovation in forensic science that can offer survivors of violent crime a path to healing and justice—particularly in cases in which all leads have been exhausted. Familial searching has enabled detectives in California to identify high-profile serial killers. Consider the case of Lonnie David Franklin, Jr., who has been linked to the murders of at least ten women in Los Angeles—who had never been convicted of a crime that required the collection of their DNA. Since Franklin had never been convicted of a felony, his DNA profile was not in the state databank. It was only in 2010, when police were able to use familial searching of DNA databanks, that they were able to identify their suspect. At the time of his capture, *Franklin's murder spree had gone unchecked for 25 years.*

The use of familial DNA searching is becoming more common worldwide. To date, familial searching has been approved for use in eleven states, and is used in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. New York should join the list of growing states using this important tool and adopt this technology. Last month, New York's Division of Criminal Justice Services released an audit that found at least 1,981 untested rape kits statewide. When these kits are submitted to the lab and analyzed, the forensic profiles may not match any offender profiles in the databank. Familial searching offers one additional tool to help law enforcement develop investigative leads and solve these cases.

We urge the Commission to authorize familial searching in June. **Survivors of violent crime deserve justice.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ilse Knecht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ilse Knecht
Director, Policy & Advocacy