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September 3, 2009

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 3rd District  
821 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Funding for rape kit backlog reduction

Dear Supervisor Yaroslavsky:

On behalf of Human Rights Watch and our Los Angeles constituency, we are writing to thank you for your leadership on the issue of the rape kit backlog. It was your instrumental advocacy that ensured funding for rape kit testing and staffing will be included in the Sheriff's FY 2010 budget.

We were heartened to receive your letter dated as of September 1, 2009, detailing an agreement between you and Sheriff Baca to allocate 2.3 million of the Sheriff's budget to rape kit testing, and an additional \$700,000 to hire crime lab staff necessary to increase the county's testing capacity. We are also pleased that you intend to ask the county to find matching funds in its FY 2011 budget for the Sheriff's rape kit backlog testing program.

We also appreciate your commitment to increase the Board of Supervisors' oversight of the Sheriff's use of these funds to ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently. We urge you to require that the Sheriff develop and regularly report on a comprehensive plan that addresses not only testing the backlog, but also developing investigative leads that result in increased arrests and prosecutions.

We know that the budget process this year has been especially difficult, as the County faces unprecedented financial strains. But there are some core government responsibilities that are non-negotiable, no matter the cost; we believe that bringing justice to victims by testing backlogged rape kits is such a responsibility and greatly appreciate your commitment to this important task. Your leadership makes it much more likely that rape victims in Los Angeles County will see justice in their cases.

Sincerely,

  
Sarah Tofte  
Researcher, US Program  
Human Rights Watch

  
Tiffany Siart  
Director, Southern California  
Human Rights Watch

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