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Retired IIP Executive Director John Hanlon Appointed to Illinois' First-Ever Forensic Science Commission

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker has appointed retired IIP Executive Director John Hanlon as one of 13 members of the state's first-ever Forensic Science Commission. Illinois joins just 10 other states with like commissions.

The Commission's charge is to look at forensic science practices in Illinois and recommend changes to laws, rules, policies and practices that will yield better results in the criminal justice system.

"We know of at least 45 innocent individuals in this state for whom forensic science problems played a significant role in their wrongful convictions," John says. "Who knows how many more are wrongfully imprisoned for the same reasons?"

"In light of this state's long history of wrongful convictions and other tragedies resulting from the use of flawed forensic evidence, the General Assembly is to be applauded for creating this Commission. And I am honored to be a part of helping to make things right."

Over the years, IIP has had numerous concerns about forensic science practices in Illinois, particularly preservation of evidence at the county level. For example, Illinois state law requires preservation of evidence from criminal cases if biological evidence is likely present but provides no guidance on how and under what conditions preservation is to occur.

"The statutory mandate of this Commission makes it apparent it will serve a vital role toward the fair, reliable and speedy administration of justice for all who are brought into the criminal justice system," John says. "Hopefully some of the best practices resulting from our work will provide justice for the guilty, and reduce and even prevent the wrongful conviction of innocent people in Illinois."

In 2020, Gov. Pritzker appointed Hanlon to the Illinois Governor's Forensic Science Task Force, whose goal, among others, was to review forensic science commissions in other states and recommend what a commission would look like in Illinois.