Illinois Forensic Science Commission
Meeting Minutes
11 March 2026

I. **Call to order**

Chairperson Claire Dragovich called to order the meeting of the Illinois Forensic Science Commission at approximately 10:02 a.m. on March 11, 2026. The meeting was held in-person at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, 1206 W. Gregory Room 612, Urbana, Illinois. The meeting also was available via Web Ex.

II. **Roll-call**

1. The following Forensic Science Commission members and staff were present:
    1. Claire Dragovich, Chairperson
    2. Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, Member
    3. Jillian Baker, Member
    4. Jeff Buford, Member
    5. Katherine Drummond, Member (via Web Ex)
    6. Judge Art Hill (ret.), Member
    7. Dr. Cris Hughes, Member
    8. Jeanne Richeal, Member (via Web Ex)
    9. Caryn Tucker, Member
    10. Peter St. Andre, Member (via Web Ex)
    11. Carrie Ward, Member
    12. Robin Woolery, Director Designee
    13. Amy Watroba, Executive Director

2. Quorum confirmed.

3. The following members of the public were present in-person:
    1. Timothy Ruppel
    2. Sarah Ware

4. The following members of the public were present via Web Ex:
    1. Maya Dukmasova
    2. Gina Havlik
    3. Jan Johnson
    4. Edmund Laube
    5. Jennifer Maples*
    6. Kevin McMahon
    7. Amy Miles
    8. Amanda Shanbaum
    9. Lindsay Simpson

    *Denotes participant who joined meeting after roll call.

III. **Review/Adoption of Minutes**

1. The motion to adopt the minutes from the December 10, 2025 Commission meeting was unanimously approved (1 member absent).

IV. **Executive Director Summary**

1. General:

   a. ED Watroba is taking steps to establish a Linked In account for the Commission.

   b. ED Watroba shared updates to the Commission's webpage.

2. Legal & Legislative Update:

   a. The legislation tracking chart is available on the Commission's shared workspace. Ms. Watroba summarized several topics that are the subject of proposed bills.

   b. SB 1889, which proposes changes to the DUI-Cannabis statute that the Commission supports, has been assigned to the Cannabis Subcommittee.

   c. HB 4498 and SB 2998 will be addressed during the Discussion portion of the meeting.

3. Education/Outreach Update:

   a. Illinois Division of the International Association for Identification (IAI): ED Watroba will present on the topic of the Illinois Forensic Science Commission at the 2026 Conference, which will be held in Downers Grove on April 27-29, 2026.

   b. National Association of Forensic Science Boards (NAFSB) Annual Conference: The 2026 NAFSB Conference will take place from October 13-15, 2026 near Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

   c. American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) Conference (February 9-13, 2026): ED Watroba attended the conference and reported back to the subcommittees on topics of interest. THC testing at AFTL was mentioned during two presentations. One presenter briefly mentioned AFTL during a broader discussion of errors in toxicology nationwide. The second presenter, who was scheduled to speak solely on the topic of AFTL, was unable to attend the conference. Another individual filled in but there was no new information to report from that presentation. Ms. Richeal, Dr. Arunkumar, and Dr. Hughes also attended the AAFS Conference.

V. **Subcommittee Reports**

1. Quality Systems Subcommittee: Claire Dragovich, subcommittee chairperson, shared that the subcommittee completed review of the Report issued by the University of Illinois- Chicago (UIC) regarding activities at the Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory (AFTL) in Chicago. The subcommittee's work product related to the UIC Report is a discussion item later in the meeting. The subcommittee has received responses from all the ISO 17025 accredited laboratories subject to the reporting requirement in the Commission's statute and the subcommittee will begin work on the 2025 Report of Significant Non-conformities at its next meeting.

2. Training and Career Development Subcommittee: Caryn Tucker, subcommittee chairperson, summarized current subcommittee projects. The subcommittee has met monthly and the video for Firearms/Toolmarks for the "Fundamentals of Forensic Science Video Series" is complete. This video will be discussed later in the meeting. The remaining disciplines (Toxicology, DNA, and Trace) are in the content-development phase and may be ready for Commission review at the June meeting. ED Watroba and the subcommittee are tracking the number of views for the posted videos (Latent Prints and Drug Chemistry) and are continually discussing strategies for marketing the videos. Projects being discussed for 2026 include: a training video for forensic scientists on the topic of ethics and using the Commission as a convenor for stakeholders by hosting a speaker series and/or panel discussions.

3. Public Policy Subcommittee: Katie Drummond, subcommittee chairperson, reported that the subcommittee met twice since the last Commission meeting. During those meetings, the subcommittee discussed and drafted the proposed complaint resource document which will be addressed during the Discussion portion of the meeting. The subcommittee has also discussed other topics to address this year including the recent changes to the FBI QAS for the use of Rapid DNA and freestanding DNA databases.

4. Technology Subcommittee: Jeff Buford, subcommittee chairperson, reported that the subcommittee met twice since the last Commission meeting. The subcommittee revisited an issue related to emerging technologies. A toxicology subject matter expert presented to the subcommittee on a validation study in progress. Once validated, the new technology will enhance certain aspects of toxicology workflow with more specific screening, detection, and enhanced sensitivity. Additionally, the subcommittee discussed the ASCLD AI statement which will be addressed later in the meeting as a discussion agenda item.

5. Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG) Subcommittee: Subcommittee chairperson Cris Hughes reported that the subcommittee met twice since the last Commission meeting and continued to draft the FAQ document and other resources for law enforcement related to FIGG. The

subcommittee hopes to complete its work on the FIGG resource documents this year. At the last meeting, the subcommittee was able to connect with members of the FBI and Chicago PD that work with FIGG and the subcommittee will invite them to return to a future meeting to share the work they are doing in their agencies.

6. Drugs Subcommittee: Subcommittee Chairperson Jill Baker reported that the subcommittee met twice since the last Commission meeting. The subcommittee has discussed how to share information with stakeholders, which will be addressed later in the meeting as a separate agenda item. The subcommittee also has discussed how to gather information about drugs that are not yet controlled but may be emerging drugs of abuse and possible uses for that information. The subcommittee also is working toward possible future legislative recommendations by evaluating and comparing the Illinois Controlled Substances Act to federal statutes to identify gaps and by discussing legislative updates related to kratom.

VI. Issues for Discussion

1. Discussion and possible action- Selection of Commission Vice-Chairperson:

   ED Watroba shared that she received multiple nominations for Jeff Buford as the next Vice-Chairperson of the Commission and that Mr. Buford graciously agreed to accept the nomination. If approved, Mr. Buford would serve as Vice-Chairperson for a term of two years.

   ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

   A motion was made to approve Jeff Buford as Vice-Chairperson. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

2. Discussion and possible action- Technology Subcommittee recommendation for statement related to Artificial Intelligence (AI):

   ED Watroba and Mr. Buford provided background on this agenda item. The Technology Subcommittee focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications in forensic science at many of its 2025 meetings. While the subcommittee was discussing AI, ASCLD released a position statement on the topic. The proposed Commission statement is to demonstrate the alignment of the Technology Subcommittee's discussions on the topic of AI applications for forensic science with ASCLD's statement. If approved, the Commission's statement and the appended ASCLD statement would be published on the Commission's website.

   A motion was made to adopt and publish the proposed statement related to AI. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

3. Discussion and possible action- Fundamentals of Forensic Science Video on Firearms/Toolmarks Discipline:

   ED Watroba provided background information on this agenda item. The Firearms/Toolmarks video is approximately 22 minutes in length and includes the same introductory content as the other videos in the series. Judge Hill congratulated Ms. Tucker and the individuals who have and are working on this video series. The creation of the videos has been very time-intensive and many subject matter experts have volunteered their time to put together the videos. ED Watroba recommended that any motion to approve the video also enable the subcommittee to make changes as needed.

   ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

   A motion was made to approve the Firearms/Toolmarks video and to allow the Training and Career Development Subcommittee to make changes, as needed. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

4. Discussion and possible action- Drugs Subcommittee recommendation regarding sharing information related to emerging drugs:

   Ms. Baker explained that the Drugs Subcommittee is interested in posting quarterly metrics on drugs that the labs have reported to share the information with other stakeholders such as coroners, medical examiners, public health entities, and legislators to get an idea of what substances are being seen in Illinois. Ms. Watroba noted that, from a procedural standpoint, the subcommittee is asking the Commission for the authority to post and update a category of information without needing to bring materials before the Commission. This is the first time a subcommittee has made a request of this nature, and similar requests are likely in the future based on the evolving nature of the various subcommittees' work. Prior to this, anything that has gone on the Commission's website has come through the Commission. However, with the type of data at issue here it is not feasible, and it does not serve the end user, to bring the data to the Commission before posting. Ms. Baker clarified that the data will relate to compounds that the laboratories have identified and reported. Ms. Baker also shared that the subcommittee plans to compile lists of potentially interested parties to notify about the availability of this data. Notices also can be shared via the Commission's Linked In page when it is up and running.

   ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

A motion was made to allow the Drugs Subcommittee to post data about reported drugs on the Commission's website and to allow the Drugs Subcommittee to make updates. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

5. Discussion and possible action- HB 4496 (procurement):

DD Woolery provided background on HB 4496 which is a procurement bill first proposed by the Department of Agriculture. The bill aims to make it easier and more efficient for state labs in several agencies to purchase items such as lab equipment and supplies in a fiscal year. Examples were provided where either time or money was wasted by laboratories because of the need to follow provisions in a procurement code that are not fit for purpose. Ms. Ward noted that issues related to procurement for labs were addressed during early days of the Commission. She discussed the importance of procurement rules for state government but also acknowledged the pitfalls and challenges when you try to apply the same policy for every government office. Ms. Ward expressed approval for the proposed language which makes clear that the labs must first attempt to follow the procurement code but then provides an exemption when necessary for the labs to move forward with an expenditure. Examples of how the proposed language could help reduce waste as well as avoid lab inefficiency were discussed. Ms. Richeal discussed the positive impact the legislation could have on the DNA sections.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. Mr. Ruppel offered public comment about the practice of sole sourcing based on his previous experience working for vendors.

The Commission then held continued discussion. Ms. Dragovich explained some of the steps laboratories must take after purchasing equipment before they can use that equipment in casework. Steps include method development, method validation, staff training, competency testing of staff, and developing and applying a quality assurance program to ensure the equipment functions as expected. Labs may prefer certain consumables for use with certain instruments because they have been validated and shown to work reliably. Ideally, labs should be able to make a decision about which vendor is the best option based on such considerations. Ms. Dragovich indicated that she supports this House Bill to ease some of the restrictive purchasing procurement limitations that the Illinois State Police labs have to deal with. Ms. Ward noted that the bill as written does not propose direct sole sourcing without first going through the existing procurement process. Ms. Richeal commented that labs want the best products to be able to help stakeholders and explained that there are many different aspects and considerations that go into evaluating products.

A motion was made that the Commission support HB 4496. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

6. Discussion and possible action- SB 2998 (Commission enabling statute):

ED Watroba provided background on this bill and shared the proposed changes to the Commission's enabling statute. The first proposed change would create a new requirement (subsection e-5) for publicly funded state and local ISO 17025 accredited laboratories to report complaints received that alleged significant non-conformities to the Commission within 30 days of receiving the complaint. The second proposed change would add language to the existing subsection f to require that the complaints be included in the annual reports. ED Watroba shared that Sen. Ellman introduced this bill. Prior to doing so, Sen. Ellman's office reached out to the Commission and indicated to ED Watroba that part of the impetus for this bill was the THC testing situation at AFTL.

Ms. Watroba noted that the bill addresses only complaints that relate to significant non-conformities or deficient methods. While significant non-conformities are already shared with the Commission annually, the proposed statutory change would allow for more real-time review and monitoring of complaints alleging significant non-conformities by the Commission. Ms. Watroba suggested that the work of tracking the complaints would likely fold into the work of the Quality Systems Subcommittee and that she, as the Commission's only staff member, feels that the Commission could handle this additional task within its existing infrastructure. Laboratories could report complaints to the Commission via the Commission's legacy email address, and the Commission could develop a system for tracking. Ms. Watroba noted that tracking complaints could provide additional data which could inform additional Commission action in the future.

Ms. Dragovich agreed that the tracking of complaints could be folded into the work of the Quality Systems Subcommittee and noted that the proposed language requires labs to report allegations of significant non-conformities received regardless of the legitimacy of the complaint.

Discussion ensued about possible workflow for sharing complaints with the Commission and the importance of ensuring consistency across lab systems for purposes of data collection. The Commission also discussed what could constitute a complaint, where complaints could originate, and whether the bill would create additional workload for the labs or Commission without attendant funding. ISO 17025 accredited labs are already required to have a process in place to handle complaints. The Quality Systems Subcommittee could discuss and decide how to minimize the additional workload on the labs to report complaints alleging significant non-conformities to the Commission. It was noted that the bill is not prescriptive as to how the information is

communicated with the Commission. As such, the labs could work together to develop a process for uniform reporting to the Commission.
ED Watroba noted that, while the amount of additional work this expansion of the Commission's scope would entail is unknown, she believes the workflow is doable with the Commission's current infrastructure. As the Commission continues to evolve and get more established, there may come a time when the Commission needs to think about adding additional staff and/or resources.

The Commission discussed the proposed statutory language and whether alternate language and/or a longer time frame than the 30 days would be better. The Quality Systems Subcommittee also would have to, as it did with the annual report of significant non-conformities, decide how to compile information related to complaints and how much information would be public facing. Discussion also ensued about the purpose of the proposed language given that the Commission is not regulatory. Ms. Watroba noted that gathering data about complaints could be informative should the Commission consider expanding its scope in the future, especially because many of the state-level commissions with regulatory authority focus on accepting and reviewing complaints. The importance of finding the right balance in the language to ensure that the right amount of information is being collected and shared to reassure the public that labs are properly processing complaints without over-correction based on a single circumstance also was discussed.

The Commission discussed possible steps it could take with respect to this bill to achieve the Commission's goals. The Commission could support the legislation if it feels it accomplishes something the Commission supports. The Commission could take a neutral position, essentially saying that it will comply if the bill passes. Or, if the Commission feels there is a better way to achieve the perceived legislative goal, the Commission could request the opportunity to provide feedback and say that it does not object to the concept but feels the legislation would be better if it addressed certain things.

Commission members expressed general support for the idea behind the bill but felt that a longer timeframe (45-60 days) for reporting to the Commission would be preferable from a workflow and laboratory systems standpoint. It is important for labs to be transparent about complaints. Discussion also ensued about the idea of expanding into a regulatory commission as a possible overcorrection without understanding what may have occurred in a particular situation versus tailoring adjustments or expansions to address particular issues. Data related to complaints could be useful to the Commission for future discussions about the Commission's scope should the Commission ever consider evolving into an oversight or regulatory Commission.

The Commission discussed evaluating the effectiveness of corrective actions and Ms. Dragovich explained the Quality Systems Subcommittee's process for reviewing the annual non-conformity reports from the labs, which includes an opportunity for questions, explanations, and discussion.

The Commission discussed how the statutory language addresses complaints received that are determined to be unfounded by the labs and whether the Commission would be confirming the labs' determinations that particular complaints were unfounded.

The Commission discussed possible next steps with respect to the current draft legislation and what, if any, input the Commission might have in the legislative process and future iterations of the bill. ED Watroba outlined possible positions the Commission could take on the current draft of the legislation and the resultant steps she would take based on those positions. A proposal was made to communicate with the legislature that the intent behind the bill is good but that the Commission thinks the legislation could be improved by changing the complaint reporting timeframe from 30 days to 60 days. The Commission could also convey its understanding of the bill, which is to provide an opportunity for the Commission to ensure that complaints are brought forth and monitored in a public and timely way since the Commission is not a regulatory body. With the adjustment to the timeframe, the Commission could convey its support for the bill. Minus the adjustment to the timeframe, the Commission would at least be neutral on the bill. There was no discussion of opposition to the bill.

The Commission discussed the interplay between the existing sections of its enabling statute that address the reporting of non-conformities to the Commission. There is nothing in the Commission's statute that requires the public sharing of any information related to the reporting or Commission review of significant non-conformities. In early days, the Commission decided it would compile an annual report of the significant non-conformities reported by the lab systems and that the Commission would make the annual report a public facing document. The proposed 30-day reporting of complaints to the Commission addresses action on the part of the labs, it does not require any additional action on the part of the Commission. ED Watroba shared that, as explained to her, part of the intent of adding subsection e-5 to the statute was to add complaints to the type of information that is shared with the Commission and to have that information shared more in real time. The Commission discussed how the sharing of more real-time information about complaints could help the Commission see a laboratory's decision-making process as it is happening, see what types of complaints are coming into the laboratories, and see how the laboratories are evaluating those complaints.

ED Watroba noted that adding complaints to subsection f allows the lab systems to share complaint information on an annual basis like they currently do with significant non-conformities. Thus far this process has been valuable by facilitating the exchange of information between lab systems and the identification of trends. If there are trends in complaints, this presumably also would be identified during the process. Commission members noted that the annual non-conformity reports have evolved and will continue to evolve as the Commission grows. It was further noted that the proposed statutory change does not add any additional task for the Commission with respect to the

information it receives about complaints that are determined to be unfounded. Ms. Dragovich pointed to the subsections in addition to subsection b-4 outlining the Commission's duties and how, depending on what the complaint data shows, the Commission could choose to formulate an action under one of those subsections. The proposed legislation would provide transparency and potentially a gap analysis between lab systems that would not otherwise occur because this type of information is not currently shared between lab systems. It could provide a good starting point and allow the Commission to do what it feels should be done with the data within the Commission's scope.

The Commission discussed the benefits of a 60-day timeframe for sharing complaints with the Commission. With a 60-day timeframe, a lab would have more information about the complaint, the nature and extent of any significant non-conformity or deficient method, and what if any corrective actions have or will be implemented. As such, the labs could provide the Commission with more complete information about a complaint if the timeframe was extended to 60 days. The lab directors and former lab directors on the Commission indicated that the labs could work with the proposed legislation and that improving transparency and sharing of information between lab systems with respect to complaints would be beneficial. The 60-day timeframe would be preferred and there will be issues to work through with respect to adjustments to the annual report and how much information about complaints is included (to provide useful information without discouraging complainants from lodging complaints). In general, the proposed legislation promotes transparency in lab operations and would help demonstrate how labs in Illinois handle complaints and non-conformities which should increase the general public's confidence about lab operations.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

A motion was made to support SB 2998, with the request to the sponsoring Senator that the number of days in the bill be amended from 30 days to 60 days. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

7. <u>Discussion and possible action- Public Policy Subcommittee recommendation for complaint resource document:</u>

ED Watroba shared that, before the legislation related to complaints was introduced, the Public Policy Subcommittee held discussions about whether there would be value in creating a resource document that provides contact information for each ISO 17025 accredited laboratory all in one place for posting on the Commission's website. The subcommittee created a draft document, which is before the Commission for discussion and possible approval.

Judge Hill commented that he thinks the document is a great idea and a valuable resource.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

A motion was made to approve the complaint resource document and to give ED Watroba the ability to amend the document as needed. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

8. Discussion and possible action- Quality Systems Subcommittee recommendation for Response to "Investigative Report Regarding the University of Illinois Chicago Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory":

ED Watroba indicated that the Quality Systems Subcommittee drafted a proposed response to the UIC Report for discussion and possible approval by the Commission. As discussed at previous Commission meetings, the first step that the Commission decided to take in response to the AFTL THC testing situation was to review the publicly available UIC Report and draft a document that is responsive to the four-corners of the UIC Report and topics discussed therein. There is other information available in the public domain about AFTL that is not addressed in this proposed responsive document and a root cause analysis has yet to be done. The proposed document is a responsive statement and recommendation. If approved, the UIC Report would be appended to the Commission's statement so both documents are available to the reader on the Commission's webpage. The proposed statement is not a comprehensive or complete list of concerns, observations, or discussion topics that were addressed during the Quality Systems Subcommittee's review of the UIC Report and that is made clear in the proposed document. In drafting the proposed document, the subcommittee prioritized what it felt would be the most important topics to end users of the UIC Report to address in the proposed responsive document.

DD Woolery commented that the subcommittee did a great job digesting the lengthy UIC Report and drafting a concise responsive document and substantive recommendation. Judge Hill thanked subcommittee chairperson Claire Dragovich for leading the subcommittee through the comprehensive review of the UIC Report. Ms. Dragovich thanked the entire subcommittee and ED Watroba for their work on the document.

ED Watroba stated that the subcommittee aimed to draft a document that was understandable to many different stakeholder groups. Dr. Arunkumar commented that she understood the document as a non-toxicologist. Judge Hill noted that the proposed statement makes clear that readers can review the subcommittee meeting minutes for more topics discussed during the review process and that the Commission's work related to AFTL continues.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

A motion was made to approve the Response to the UIC Report and to post it on the Commission's website. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

Given the importance and public interest in this document, ED Watroba indicated that she would prioritize this document for publication on the Commission's website as soon as possible. After it is posted, ED Watroba will email the document to the individuals at UIC/AFTL that the subcommittee communicated with during the 2024 significant non-conformity reporting period.

VII. Housekeeping Items

ED Watroba shared that it will not be possible to hold the June Commission meeting at the ISP Forensic Science Center in Chicago due to lab construction, but that it may be possible to hold the September Commission meeting there. The June meeting will be held in Room 1619 at the IGB building at UIUC and will be available via Web Ex.

VIII. Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

IX. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting is scheduled at 10:00 a.m., on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, 1206 W. Gregory Room 1619, Urbana, Illinois. The meeting also will be available via Web Ex.

X. Adjournment

Chairperson Dragovich adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:17 p.m. on March 11, 2026.