



INDEPENDENT AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT OF OREGON'S STATE CRIME LABS ESSENTIAL TO RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST

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PORTLAND, Ore. – “Oregon Innocence Project believes news that crime lab analyst Nika Larsen has admitted stealing as many as 700 pills while working for Oregon State Police and may have affected more than 2,500 cases statewide affirms the concerns we have raised and the need for greater oversight, transparency, and accountability in our public crime labs.

It is fundamental to our justice system that the public and system stakeholders can have confidence in the evidence that is presented in court and the work of the labs’ employees. It appears that Larsen’s crimes were not a one-off event but rather a pattern of repeated theft of pills that suggests proper controls of evidence were not in place at OSP. The total impact of her conduct is not yet known, but we do know it has been very costly to the state and at least two counties.

Nika Larsen’s theft is just one of several issues that have occurred at the OSP labs in the past few years. As a result, we have repeatedly called for a thorough independent audit of the OSP crime labs and the creation of a permanent, independent oversight body. We know the Governor’s work group that was set up to look at this issue recognizes the seriousness of this situation. Now that Larsen’s case is concluded, we are hopeful that the recommendations we have put forward will be implemented.”

To be attributed to Bobbin Singh, Executive Director, Oregon Justice Resource Center. (OJRC runs the Oregon Innocence Project.) For more information or interviews, please contact Alice Lundell.