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Council Member Pollard Gives Houston Forensic Science Center \$50,000 as Homicides Spike Nearly 28 Percent in 2021

HOUSTON, TX – Oct. 13, 2021 – Houston City Council Member **Edward Pollard** is dedicating \$50,000 of his district’s discretionary funds to help pay for crime scene investigators’ overtime as homicides continue to spike, rising nearly 28 percent in 2021 compared to last year.

In the first two weeks of October alone, the **Houston Forensic Science Center’s** 39-member crime scene unit (CSU) has responded to 27 homicides, and 24 other scenes, for a total of 1,171 scenes this year. The crime scene unit averaged 4.8 scenes per day in September – among them 56 homicides. The city is currently averaging well over two homicides per day.

“This unit operates 24/7 and responds to crimes across Houston’s 685 square miles, and they are only making it to a fraction of the violent crimes committed in the city because we simply don’t have the resources,” said **Dr. Peter Stout**, HFSC’s CEO and president.

“At this pace, I am not only worried about the mental health and safety of my staff, I am also worried we will not have enough money to finish off the fiscal year. Council Member Pollard’s generosity and support will help us with some of these challenges, but there is no question it is not enough,” Dr. Stout added.

Council Member Pollard has been a visible and vocal advocate for creative methods to support public safety. He hopes his contribution to the HFSC will inspire other council members to follow suit.

“It’s no secret that violent crime has escalated as of late, so we have to put all options on the table if we’re going to curb this upswing. Manpower is at a premium in almost every industry, and law enforcement is no exception. In order to effectively prosecute offenders, it’s imperative that we have the evidence collected by the men and women of the forensics center,” said Council Member Pollard.

HFSC has already paid more than \$180,000 in overtime this year compared to just over \$78,300 during the same period last year, a 130% increase. Most of this has been for CSU, though some has also gone to technicians in the unit who upload images into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), the national firearms database. That unit has seen the average number of guns increase from about 300 a month in 2019 to more than 550 guns a month this year.

“Every discipline is being impacted not only by the surge in violent crime but also the courts going back into session after more than a year of near total standstill,” Dr. Stout added. “At some point, something’s got to give.”

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC operates in seven forensic disciplines.

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