



TESTIMONY FOR HB0836 COVID-19 TESTING, CONTRACT TRACING, AND VACCINATION ACT OF 2021

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Pena-Melnyk
Committee: Health and Government Operations
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0836 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

Our members strongly support this bill. It's about time that the General Assembly took control of this train wreck. How can we be this far into a pandemic with no plan? If we do have one, no one really knows what it is. The plan for testing seems to be - if you think you need a test, you try to find one. We also don't even know if contract tracing is happening, although from personal experience, people I know who were exposed to the virus never had anyone ask who they were in contact with.

And trying to find a vaccination is like looking for a pot of gold on the other side of a rainbow. There is no single place to sign up. There is no way of knowing if you will ever be called, or how many people are even in the same category as you are. Also, who is in each category keeps changing, and now people who are young seem to be displacing people who are elderly as more and more categories of people are considered front line workers. The vaccines are not being given out equitably to people of color and depending on what county you live in, your likelihood of getting a vaccine is very different. It's a disaster.

This bill will require that the Maryland Department of Health, in conjunction with local Health Departments in the state, creates a 2-year plan for handling testing, contract tracing and vaccinations. Additionally, specific plans are required by nursing homes, home health agencies, colleges and other major institutions. Finally, an overall go-forward plan will be developed by the Maryland Public Health Infrastructure Modernization Workgroup that will help the state deal with any other health emergencies in the future.

We understand that this will be expensive, but at least it will be money well spent. Right now, we are spending money that is getting us nowhere.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.