



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 836 (Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk)  
COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021  
FAVORABLE**

February 23, 2021

To Chairwoman Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in support of House Bill 836. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just, and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders.

Like other states, Maryland has been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic, affecting all Maryland residents throughout the state. As of February 18, 2021, the Maryland Health Department has recorded 373,966 confirmed cases and 7,479 confirmed deaths, and highly populated counties, such as Prince George's County, Montgomery County, and Baltimore County, have experienced the most cases. At the beginning stages of the Pandemic, the daily positive rate reached 29.38% on April 14, 2020. With the increased COVID-19 testing and the Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines development and distribution, cases have decreased and stabilized. Also, Governor Hogan and the Department of Health's statewide orders and recommendations further reduce COVID-19 contractions. Although measures have been taken to address the Pandemic as it presently persists, we need to develop a plan to address the issues of COVID-19 for the future.

With the COVID-19 Testing, Contract Tracing, and Vaccination Act, state and local Health Departments would implement a two-year plan to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19. This Act calls for a better plan to monitor and prevent the spread of COVID-19 from occurring and promotes the protection from the burdensome healthcare costs associated with COVID-19 testing to both insured and uninsured Marylanders. For the two-year plan, funding will be granted to jurisdictions for contract tracing, testing, vaccine distribution, and assisted living programs throughout this timespan. With this funding, jurisdictions would be able to return to normalcy while proceeding with caution along the way.

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House Bill 836 is necessary legislation that helps Maryland combat the ongoing Pandemic by establishing a plan of action to protect all Maryland residents throughout this crisis. There is more work to be done to help Maryland recover to its potential, and the first step is to address the issues of COVID-19. Strong Future Maryland urges the committee to vote favorably on House Bill 836.

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland,

John B. King  
Founder & Board Chair

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