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MAYOR

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HB 836

February 23, 2021

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: HOUSE BILL 836 – COVID–19 TESTING, CONTACT TRACING,
AND VACCINATION ACT OF 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 836.

HB 836 would require, among other provisions, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and local health departments to develop a two-year plan to address the COVID-19 pandemic including testing, contact tracing, and vaccination infrastructure and implementation.

BCA believes HB 836 is needed to ensure additional local government input into COVID-19 planning. In Baltimore City, a lack of local input has resulted in critical gaps in testing and vaccination infrastructure, including information technology lapses resulting in missed or over-booked appointments and insufficient testing kits and vaccine doses. Additional issues have arisen over the inequitable distribution of COVID-19-related resources across racial and socioeconomic divides.

Between December 29, 2020 and February 7, 2021, the Baltimore City Health Department administered 8,877 COVID-19 vaccine doses. With limited input regarding vaccine eligibility, only 27.27% of said doses were delivered to Black residents, and only 20.78% were delivered to individuals aged 60 years or older. Additional planning and coordination at the state level, along with significantly more local input, is a necessary step to ensure these communities, with the former comprising the majority of Baltimore City's population, are equitably served.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 836.

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