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Baltimore, MD 21207

TO: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass
Chairwoman, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: LeadingAge Maryland

SUBJECT: House Bill 836, COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021

DATE: February 23, 2021

POSITION: Favorable

LeadingAge Maryland writes to request a favorable report on House Bill 836, COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021.

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. We represent more than 120 not-for-profit organizations, including the vast majority of CCRCs in Maryland. Our mission is to expand the world of possibilities for aging in Maryland. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland.

This bill requires compliance with the federal and CDC guidelines and mandates the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to adopt a plan to respond to the COVID19 outbreak in collaboration with local health departments. This will be a 2-year plan. The bill has three priorities - testing, contact tracing, and vaccine administration and allocates funds to local jurisdictions to carry out the response. It establishes a public health reserve job corps to meet staffing needs in the state and a workgroup to assess Maryland's Public health infrastructure and capacity to respond to the pandemic. Insurance carriers are responsible for covering costs of testing and vaccine administrations for their members. In addition and importantly, this bill requires home health agencies, nursing homes, assisted living programs to implement an

effective COVID19 testing plan, that offers regular/frequent testing to prevent the spread of COVID19. Department provides up to \$9,000,000 in 2021 and \$36,000,000 in 2022 in grant funding to nursing homes, home health agencies, and assisted living programs to cover costs of COVID19 testing for residents, patients, and staff.

The long-term care industry has been on the front lines of COVID-19 and has not been immune from the operational and fiscal obstacles. Whether it is ensuring appropriate levels of personal protective equipment or access to sufficient testing kits, our sector has been impacted. Providers have faced mounting costs and decreases in revenue over the last year. The costs of required testing, PPE, increased pay for staff (including overtime and incentive pay) have cost providers hundreds of thousands to even millions of dollars. These were unbudgeted and ongoing expenses. Some organizations received federal and/or State funds to offset some of the increased cost. Unfortunately, that funding has failed to cover the full impact of the expenses and many providers are facing significant financial strife. By including this necessary grant funding, long-term care facilities will be able to recoup costs expended, have predictability and continue to effectively provide the quality of care are residents deserve.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for House Bill 836.

For additional information, please contact Aaron J. Greenfield, 410.446.1992