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SB 741

February 24, 2021

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 741 – COVID–19 Testing, Contact Tracing, And Vaccination Act Of 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 741.

SB 741 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 SB 741 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 Senate Bill 741.

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