



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

February 12, 2020

The Hon. Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 580 - Maryland Department of Health - Biosafety Level 3 Laboratories - Letter of Support

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) supports House Bill (HB) 580 and recommends that the Committee report this bill favorably.

There are four levels of biosafety laboratories (BSL) in the United States. HB580 requires that BSL-3 facilities in Maryland register and report certain basic information about each facility to the Department. The Department believes that this reporting requirement is relatively simple administratively and can be done through an online form.

HB580 is the result of a compromise that the Department crafted with Senator and Delegate Young last session. We believe that the action item, reporting to the Department, is accomplished by a simple legal mechanism. If a BSL-3 facility reports to the Department, standard legal liability rules apply. If a BSL-3 facility fails to report to the Department, their activities would be considered ultrahazardous (along the lines of fracking or offshore oil drilling), and they would be strictly liable for damages for any injury, death, or loss to person or property caused by the BSL-3 facility.

The Department believes that HB580 will lead to improved safety for first responders that respond to previously unknown sites, better communication with the local community in case of an emergency, and minimal impact on businesses.

We thank the Frederick County Delegation for unanimously endorsing HB580 and respectfully recommend that the Committee report HB580 favorably. If you have additional questions, please contact Director of Governmental Affairs Webster Ye at (410) 260-3190 or webster.ye@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Neall
Secretary