



190 West Ostend St., #201
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone: 410.547.1515
Fax: 410.837.5436

Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
SB 741 – COVID 19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021
Support

AFSCME Council 3 represents 30,000 State and Higher Education employees across Maryland. This legislation requires the Maryland Department of Health, by April 1, 2021, to adopt and implement a 2-year COVID-19 outbreak prevention plan for local jurisdictions and higher education institutions. This plan must address access to the unmet needs for testing, contact tracing, and vaccinations. The legislation also establishes the Maryland Public Health Job Corps which will be comprised of local health department community health care workers and other health care professionals and stakeholders. The Maryland Public Health Job Corps can be deployed to assist with testing, contact tracing, vaccine administration, and other case management needs for individuals who test positive.

This legislation also requires that Maryland Public Health Job Corps prioritize for recruitment workers who have been affected by COVID-19 layoffs to enable the possibility of permanent employment after the pandemic to meet the continued needs of underserved communities in our state. SB 741 also includes much-needed grant funds to local health departments to with expanding contact tracing and testing capacity. Regarding vaccinations, SB 741 requires the Department of Health in consultation with subject matter experts, to develop and submit a plan for vaccinating residents in the state by April 1, 2021, including timelines, target metrics, resources needed to perform education and outreach to communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 virus. Finally, SB 741 addresses long-term public health needs by requiring the Maryland Department of Health to convene a Maryland Public Health Infrastructure Modernization Workgroup.

Entering the pandemic, our bargaining units in the Local Health Departments across the State were maintaining nearly a 40% vacancy rate. Our Local Health Departments were forced to undergo cuts during the Great Recession and never fully rebounded. This left them understaffed and under-resourced to deal the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. SB 741 provides mandates and resources to strengthen the workforce and infrastructure in our public health delivery system. SB 741 is a good and comprehensive Bill that will help Maryland more effectively combat the COVID-19 virus.

We urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 741.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
800.492.1996

Find us: afscmemd.org
Like us: facebook.com/AFSCMEMD
Follow/Tweet us: [@afscmemaryland](https://twitter.com/afscmemaryland)