

February 7, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair Senate Finance Committee
3 East - Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – Senate Bill 281: Commission on Public Health – Establishment

Dear Chair Griffith and Honorable Members of the Committee,

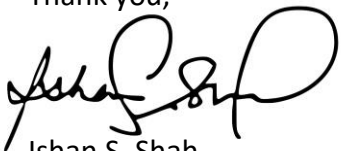
On behalf of Quest Diagnostics, I appreciate the opportunity to offer comments regarding Senate Bill 281: Commission on Public Health – Establishment (SB 281), which establishes a Commission of Public Health to make recommendations to improve the delivery of "foundational public health services" in the state. Quest Diagnostics is the world's leading provider of diagnostic information services and serves one in three adult Americans and half the physicians and hospitals in the United States annually. We are particularly proud of our presence in Maryland, which includes over 1,100 employees, 2 rapid response laboratories, and 52 walk-in patient service centers throughout the state. With our robust infrastructure in Maryland, we service over 14,000 physicians and 49 hospitals.

Quest Diagnostics has been at the forefront of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Maryland since we first launched our laboratory-developed COVID-19 molecular test in March 2020. As you know, widespread patient hesitancy to return to healthcare services combined with closed or limited availability of healthcare services during the pandemic has created a hidden epidemic of deferred care. The result has been an underdiagnosis and a gap in care, with missed opportunities to provide timely and appropriate treatments, consequently leading to increased chronic disability and mortality.

The long-term impact of the collateral adverse effects of pandemic-related deferred care is staggering and may be felt for a generation. For example, one of several Quest studies illustrating the impact of the hidden epidemic showed new diagnoses of eight common types of cancer declined by 46% during most of the first 13 months of the pandemic. Quest Diagnostics and clinical laboratories' public health leaders must do everything possible to ensure patients return to care. SB 281 is a meaningful step in that direction.

Quest Diagnostics appreciates the efforts of this committee to improve the public health response in light of lessons learned from COVID-19. With our unique ability to provide diagnostic insights, the inclusion of a clinical laboratory will strengthen the makeup of the Commission. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (201) 234-9261 or Ishan.S.Shah@QuestDiagnostics.com if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Thank you,



Ishan S. Shah
Senior Manager, Government Affairs