

# Maryland PIRG

Maryland Public Interest Research Group

## **HB836/SB741: COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Vaccination Act of 2021**

**Tuesday, February 23, 2021: Health and Government Operations/Appropriations Committees**

**Wednesday, February 24rd, 2021: Finance Committee**

**FAVORABLE**

*Maryland Public Interest Research Group (Maryland PIRG) is a citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state.*

COVID-19 is still raging across Maryland and the rest of the country. Before long, 8,000 Marylanders and 500,000 Americans will have died due to this deadly virus.

We're calling on the General Assembly to swiftly approve this bill for more robust planning and goal setting for Maryland's COVID-19 response including expanded testing, contact tracing, and vaccine distribution.

Our Achilles' heel when it comes to our nation's COVID-19 response has always been a severe lack of funding and coordination. We saw this happen with [testing infrastructure](#) and now it's the same story on vaccine distribution.

The failure of our federal government has done the most harm, and states have been left to pick up the slack. While vaccination distribution is underway, most Marylanders are still months away from getting their shots. And we know resources will be needed to help harder-to-reach populations get their vaccines. Many will need a more individualized or localized approach to assure trust and to assist with the logistics of getting registered for the vaccine appointment and even getting transportation to the site. And although vaccines are rolling out, robust testing and contact tracing is still one of the best ways to protect everyone until broad swaths of the public are vaccinated.

Without additional legislation to help pay to combat COVID-19 and minimize its spread, tens of thousand more Marylanders will get sick, thousands more will die unnecessarily, and we will prolong economic and other damage to our state.

According to public health experts from the Harvard Global Health Institute and Brown University School of Public Health, [Maryland is still not consistently meeting testing targets](#) a year into the pandemic. We also need a stronger [workforce of contact tracers](#), one large enough to trace all current cases.

Increased funding and coordination of the state's COVID-19 response will save lives and help us overcome this crisis and all the hardships that have come along with it.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

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