



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 24, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CHH", is written over the printed name "C.H. Huckelberry".

Re: **Continuing COVID-19 Testing**

The attached letter is one of the letters sent to the Congressional Delegation asking for assistance in securing additional COVID-19 testing funds.

With little notice, the State indicated they would no longer pay for COVID-19 testing that had largely transferred from our contractor, Paradigm Laboratories, through a contract with the State. Due to rising COVID-19 infections, testing demand has dramatically increased, rising from 701 COVID-19 tests in the second week in June to 4,561 tests in the second week of August.

Testing, contact tracing and case investigation are a central requirement of our public health agency to curtail the spread of COVID-19. The State has sufficient funds to cover this expense. Why they have chosen to discontinue funding COVID-19 testing in Pima County is a mystery. Maybe they have spent the billion-plus dollars allocated to Arizona by the federal government.

We are now developing a plan to re-implement COVID-19 testing at a County facility on Wednesday August, 25, 2021. In meantime, the State is continuing to pay for COVID-19 testing performed by Arizona State University at the Ellie Towne Community Center and COVID-19 testing at the Tucson International Airport.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c: Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Pima County Health Department



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

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C.H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

August 23, 2021

The Honorable Mark Kelly
Suite B40B, Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: **COVID-19 Testing Resources**

Dear Honorable Mark Kelly:

In legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President, states have been allocated billions to address primary and secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic including specific funding for COVID-19 testing. The State of Arizona specifically allocated approximately \$14.4 million or 3.4 percent of their Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) allocation of \$416 million for COVID-19 testing to Pima County. The County spent these funds between January 15, 2021 and the end of March of this year. A time period when the number of new infections were declining from their peak of 1,734 cases on January 4, 2021.

The County has now spent over \$49 million on COVID-19 testing since the pandemic began. During the period of April 2021 to early August 2021 when the infection rate was relatively low the State paid for most COVID-19 testing in Pima County.

As testing demand began to skyrocket in the last two weeks, similar to late December 2020 and early January 2021, the State has now declined to pay for fixed site COVID-19 testing as of August 10, 2021 even though several of those sites are in disadvantaged communities. Ironically, the State has continued to pay for testing at our airport, but its location is far from our population centers.

As a reminder, between December 21, 2020 and January 15, 2021, Pima County spent approximately \$7.5 million on COVID-19 testing and asked the State of Arizona to reimburse this expenditure from one of their numerous federal funding sources. The State has said the County is not eligible to be reimbursed for these expenses because they occurred before January 15, 2021. However, this limitation only applied to one of the many federal funding sources the State could have tapped to assist the Pima County testing shortfall.

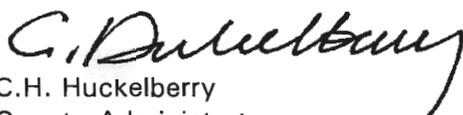
The Honorable Mark Kelly
Re: **COVID-19 Testing Resources**
August 23, 2021
Page 2

It is apparent the State is now attempting to shift the COVID-19 testing burden back to the County at a time when testing volumes are skyrocketing. During the week ending on June 14, 2021, 701 tests were performed and during the week ending August 15, 2021, 4,561 tests were performed by the State's fixed site contractor, Paradigm Laboratories. We will accept this testing obligation but we would request reimbursement of our previous \$7.5 million testing expense or additional federal funds directed to the State for COVID-19 testing in Pima County.

Since the State has now, again, declined to pay for legitimate COVID-19 testing by our local public health agency, I am appealing for your assistance to provide either a direct funding allocation to Pima County's public health agency and bypass the State or insist the State continue to fund COVID-19 testing from funds appropriated by Congress directed to states.

As a final note, the State has indicated the ELC resources for testing or \$14.4 million, passed through the State "is not intended to support universal free testing for the entire county" and has further stated that testing providers seek insurance and other reimbursement. Apparently, they would like us to charge for testing. It is a simple fact that adding administrative barriers to testing and vaccination is a practice proven to perpetuate the COVID-19 pandemic – hardly a wise public health response. The Board of Supervisors has consistently directed that barriers to COVID mitigation especially among low-income and communities of color should be eliminated. We intend to continue to follow that policy direction, which has been responsible for our continued success with these segments of our community and our population in general.

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

- c: The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Daniel Ruiz II, Chief of Staff to Governor Ducey
Jan Leshner, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Pima County Health Department