



## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER  
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C.H. HUCKELBERRY  
County Administrator

August 23, 2021

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema  
317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: **COVID-19 Testing Resources**

Dear Honorable Sinema:

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.

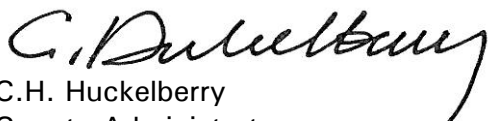
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It is apparent the State is now attempting to shift the COVID-19 testing burden back to the County at a time when testing volumes are skyrocketing. During the week ending on June 14, 2021, 701 tests were performed and during the week ending August 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