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Appropriations Committee
Chair
Health and Social
Services Subcommittee

House Chair
Joint Committee on Behavioral Health
and Opioid Use Disorders



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Secretary Robert Neall
Department of Health
Herbert R. O'Connor State Office Building
201 West Preston Street, 5th floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Secretary Neall,

I am writing out of grave concern over the lack of deployment of needed COVID-19 testing kits and supplies across the State of Maryland. As you know, on April 20th, Governor Hogan announced to great fanfare that he had secured and purchased 500,000 COVID-19 testing kits at a cost to the Maryland taxpayers of \$9 million from Republic of Korea. Since then, there has been no indication that any of these kits have been dispersed or used, and that they continue to be held in an undisclosed location, under the protection of the Maryland National Guard and State police.

News is now surfacing, through reporting by the Washington Post and Baltimore Sun, that the kits themselves were not in short supply in the United States. Rather, ancillary items that are necessary to actually effectuate the tests, such as nasal swabs, reagents, and viral transport media are actually the difficult items to procure and are still not in hand. As was quoted by Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich “[w]ithout things like reagents, they are sort of like paperweights.” In addition, the reporting indicates that because there was no shortage of actual testing kits, and that Maryland overpaid for the 500,000 units.

With over 1,500 deaths in the State of Maryland and that number rising daily, it is my understanding that some jurisdictions, like Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties, are actively looking to source their own testing supplies outside of the State’s help, while 500,000 units are gathering dust in an undisclosed location. If these reports are accurate, then I am shocked by the audacity of your Department and the Administration in general. Coupled with the report that Maryland contracted for PPE supplies and ventilators from a partisan-connected company that hadn’t existed two months before and paid 50% upfront, which is now being cancelled, it appears that there is way too much waste of precious government resources by this Administration.

It is unconscionable for the Governor to demand that nursing homes and residential care facility, the source of over 60% of COVID-related deaths, immediately test all staff and residents through

Executive Order, and not provide them the means to do so, while sitting on a half-a-million unit supply.

If these reports are unfounded, then please provide me with a list of where the test kits were deployed, the quantity, and the dates, so that I can provide this information to my legislative colleagues and put these concerns to rest.

If on the other hand, nothing has been deployed but you have everything needed to utilize them, then I must insist that the Administration immediately deploy the units to nursing homes and care facilities, agriculture processing facilities (another spiking source of COVID-19-related illness), and to large jurisdictions with the largest number of cases.

If, finally, both scenarios are not true, and you are sitting on unusable tests for which we paid \$9 million and the Governor received national press and publicity for sourcing on his own, then I need to know why this information was not conveyed when the tests were acquired or an indication of when you anticipate the ancillary supplies and how and when the tests will be deployed for use.

I understand that we are in difficult times, and that, in the course of responding quickly to an emergency situation, mistakes can be made. I also know that you and your staff are working overtime and under extreme conditions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. That being said, these questions are important, and answering them is critical to getting the virus under control, and making our residents healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KR', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Kirill Reznik