



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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June 30, 2020

Admiral Brett P. Giroir, MD
Assistant Secretary for Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Admiral Giroir:

On behalf of Washington State, thank you for your collaboration and partnership in supporting our COVID-19 testing needs. Testing is foundational to our pandemic response and the critical first step of boxing in the virus, and the recent commitment by the federal government to provide supply chain support has been a meaningful part of bolstering our efforts over the last two months. Washington State has now successfully doubled our COVID-19 testing levels to a daily average of more than 8,600 tests during the last week.

Unfortunately, the nascent federal supply effort for COVID-19 testing has been beset by logistical problems that impede our pandemic response and undermine our shared goals. We appreciate that some of the defects of the first wave of supplies received in May appear to have been remedied. For example, we are no longer receiving the bulk-packaged swabs that had questionable sterility and limited suitability for deployment to local communities. Other problems are ongoing, particularly a variety of issues regarding the transport media shipments. Our team at the Washington Department of Health (DOH) has tried to resolve these at the staff level, but we now request your personal attention to addressing these issues.

Washington State maintains high standards for the safety, sterility, and accuracy of our infectious disease testing system. This is always true, but holds particular importance during a public health crisis. As such, our pandemic response team takes seriously its responsibility to remain vigilant in inspecting incoming supplies to ensure the reliability of mission-critical COVID-19 testing.

Regrettably, a variety of federal supplies have failed our quality-control checks or presented other major barriers to usage, including:

- More than 100,000 units of unlabeled Molecular Transport Media (MTM), which if used with incompatible testing platforms can produce dangerous cyanide gas.
- Approximately 300,000 units of unlabeled Fill-a-kit vials, without lot numbers, clear expiration dates, or vial content identification.
- Approximately 250,000 bulk-packaged polyester spun swabs, which the state is now having re-sterilized and individually repackaged, incurring significant delays and costs.

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- A wide variety of other poorly packaged and unlabeled goods, shipping delays without temperature regulation, and shipments requiring refrigeration that are delivered without notice or time to arrange for adequate temperature control, all requiring significant staff time to sort and do unnecessary quality control.

These reoccurring problems are creating barriers to our effectively carrying out Washington's testing strategy. In addition to imposing a significant burden on limited Department of Health and other state response staff time and resources, the combination of supply chain challenges—particularly those affecting the transport media—threatens to limit our overall testing capacity at a critical time in the pandemic response. I ask for the opportunity to discuss with you how these issues can be promptly addressed to support our shared goal of expanding testing and slowing the spread of the virus in our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH
Secretary of Health