

April 2, 2020

Robert Redfield, M.D.
Director
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Redfield:

As you know, commercial laboratories are taking unprecedented steps to expand testing capacity for COVID-19 testing in the United States. To date, ACLA members have reported out almost one million COVID-19 tests since they began testing at the beginning of March. This dramatic increase in testing has occurred despite the fact that laboratories are unable to secure predictable and consistent access to critical supplies such as specimen collection materials, test kits, reagents and personal protective equipment.

Since our first discussions with the CDC and other members of the Task Force, ACLA has highlighted the importance of prioritizing testing for those most in need. Testing capacity at this time remains insufficient to meet the needs of all Americans. Without immediate and aggressive education to physicians, hospitals and other providers, as a nation we will be unable to prioritize those most in need.

The CDC's March 24 guidance, "Criteria to Guide Evaluation and Laboratory Testing for COVID-19" is a critical first step in providing clinicians with necessary direction regarding how and for whom testing should be ordered.

In addition to developing guidelines, aggressive promotion of these guidelines directed at providers who order testing is critical. We appreciate the CDC highlighting these guidelines with ACLA and the laboratory community in general. However, laboratories perform, but do not order testing; we rely on the expertise of our partners in hospitals and physician offices to appropriately mark specimens for expedited testing as appropriate.

We urge the CDC to take immediate and proactive steps to educate providers and the American public about the new guidelines. Comprehensive communication with medical societies, provider and hospital organizations, state medical boards and state and local health departments is critical to help raise awareness and adoption of the CDC's new guidelines. Unfortunately, our understanding is that many of these groups have not received notice of the new testing guidelines. Additionally, while the current guidance states that clinicians are "strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness (e.g., influenza)" more information is needed to help providers understand what factors should be weighed and considered when making such a determination.

Further, while we appreciate that the White House has taken a "states first" approach to this pandemic, for the new guidance to be as effective as possible, the CDC should clarify how federal guidelines should be used to inform local efforts. This is especially important in cases where a state does not yet have the necessary data to establish a clear and effective testing prioritization protocol.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical matter. We remain committed to strengthening our public-private partnership and will continue to do everything we can to support the agency's COVID-19 response efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Khani". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "K".

Julie Khani, President