



Statement for the Record
American Clinical Laboratory Association
Hearing before the House Energy and Commerce Committee
“LIFT America: Revitalizing our Nation’s Infrastructure and Economy”
March 22, 2021

The American Clinical Laboratory Association (ACLA) is pleased to submit this statement for the record and appreciates the efforts of Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Rodgers in convening this hearing on the *Leading Infrastructure For Tomorrow’s America Act (LIFT) Act*. Thank you for your leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and your recognition of the importance of investment in our nation’s health care infrastructure to prepare for and prevent future public health emergencies.

ACLA is the national trade association representing leading laboratories that deliver essential diagnostic health information to patients and providers. ACLA members are at the forefront of driving diagnostic innovation to meet the country’s evolving health care needs and provide vital clinical laboratory tests that help identify and prevent infectious, acute, and chronic disease. ACLA members also have been a vital component of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, having performed more than 110 million COVID-19 diagnostic tests to date. ACLA works to advance the next generation of health care delivery through policies that expand access to lifesaving testing services.

ACLA applauds the LIFT America Act’s significant investment in our nation’s public health infrastructure, including clinical laboratories. Since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, ACLA member laboratories have been working around the clock to meet patients’ evolving health needs while adapting platforms and workflows, navigating supply constraints, and working creatively and collaboratively with federal, state and local governments. Commercial laboratories have played an essential role in rapidly expanding access to COVID-19 testing and providing surge capacity testing for the CDC and public health labs in the COVID-19 response and past public health emergencies. We strongly support Section 40004 of LIFT America Act, which establishes a pilot program to provide much-needed grants to clinical laboratories for improvement, renovation, and modernization efforts to expand and enhance COVID-19 testing. These funds will support sustained laboratory capacity in the COVID-19 response, as well as preparedness for future emergencies so that testing can be ramped up as quickly as possible in response to emerging threats.

ACLA strongly supports the establishment of a national public health reporting system that enables uniform reporting across the country and improved access to data to inform response efforts and identify health disparities. We are encouraged by increased resources in Sections 40001 and 40002 of the LIFT America Act to support modernization of public health IT infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted

troubling gaps in our nation's public health data systems that have created barriers to accessing critical data on race and ethnicity needed to address health disparities. The current patchwork system of public health data reporting requirements and inconsistent public health authority data system capabilities lack interoperability and require laboratories to report varying data sets of patient information and results to multiple systems on the federal, state, and local levels. These duplicative data feeds place additional cost and burden on clinical laboratories that often lack direct access to the demographic data being requested at the same time that laboratories already are expending tremendous resources to sustain testing capacity. We urge CDC to utilize resources provided by the LIFT America Act to implement a centralized platform for laboratory results, work with states to standardize reporting requirements, and direct demographic data reporting obligations away from laboratories and toward the ordering providers who have direct access to such information.

While the LIFT America Act marks an important step in addressing public health infrastructure needs, additional reforms will be necessary to support a robust laboratory infrastructure and ensure our nation is better prepared for future public health emergencies. We look forward to continuing to work with the Energy & Commerce Committee to address other key issues impacting clinical laboratories, including the threat of substantial cuts to Medicare reimbursement for laboratory tests under the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) set to take effect in 2022. ACLA is also committed to working with the Energy & Commerce Committee on comprehensive diagnostics oversight reform to encourage innovation and support continued access to accurate and reliable laboratory developed tests (LDTs), which have been a critical component of the COVID-19 response.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. ACLA stands ready to serve as a resource to you in the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. If you have any questions, please contact Tom Sparkman at tsparkman@acla.com.