

# THE EXPANDING COVID-19 TESTING CAPACITY ACT

## THE PROBLEM

Nearly [20 million](#) Americans have contracted COVID-19 and over [300,000](#) have died. Though vaccine distribution has begun, public health experts have warned that the coming months will be “[the darkest days of the pandemic](#)” in the U.S. To get the virus under control, [experts have called](#) for aggressive COVID-19 testing, and leadership of the National Institutes of Health has [called](#) for testing “as many people as possible.” But the nation is not conducting nearly enough tests to stop the spread of the virus. Though the nation’s testing capacity has drastically improved since the start of the pandemic, the U.S. is only conducting roughly [2 million](#) daily tests. More testing capacity is necessary: labs are experiencing processing delays and struggling to access materials—like pipette tips—they need to conduct tests. The federal government has yet to provide the resources necessary to mitigate testing shortages.

## THE EXPANDING COVID-19 TESTING CAPACITY ACT

To ensure that the nation has the testing capacity it needs, Senator Warren is introducing the **Expanding COVID-19 Testing Capacity Act of 2020**. The legislation would:

- **Require the federal government to publicly manufacture diagnostic tests and testing supplies.** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would stabilize the testing supply chain by manufacturing, or contracting for the manufacture of, diagnostic tests and associated medical products (like personal protective equipment, reagents, and pipette tips) and providing those products free of charge to state, local, territorial, and tribal health care providers and programs.
- **Test essential workers, students and teachers, residents and employees at congregate facilities, and others for COVID-19.** The bill requires the federal government to distribute COVID-19 tests to qualified entities like schools, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and factories for the purpose of providing free testing to individuals at highest risk of COVID-19.
- **Provide federal employees with free COVID-19 tests.** The federal government would provide employees unable to socially distance or telework in the course of their jobs with free COVID-19 tests for the duration of the pandemic.
- **Invest an additional \$25 billion in state, local, territorial, and tribal testing systems** to strengthen existing infrastructure, develop new testing sites, and reduce testing disparities.
- **Ensure individuals hired or employed using funding provided by the bill have access to critical labor protections**, including a \$15 minimum wage and overtime pay.
- **Require HHS, acting through the Food and Drug Administration, to issue a series of guidance and reports** designed to expedite the approval of COVID-19 diagnostic tests and provide resources on testing program best practices.
- **Collect demographic data on COVID-19 tests administered through the bill** to gather the information necessary to reduce disparities in COVID-19 outcomes.

## ENDORSEMENTS

Partners in Health, Massachusetts Medical Society