



Health Facilities Association of Maryland Announces Associate Member AMS Onsite to Offer Additional COVID-19 Testing for Nursing Homes

May 13, 2020 – Linthicum, MD – Today the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM) announced its newest Associate Member, [AMS Onsite](#), an infection control management practice specializing in nursing homes, is available to offer additional COVID-19 testing and support for nursing homes in Maryland. This additional testing capacity comes at a critical time as nursing homes have been mandated to test all residents and staff, per Governor Hogan’s April 29 executive order.

“HFAM has long been advocating for increased universal testing in order to identify asymptomatic cases and stop the spread of this deadly virus,” said Joseph DeMattos, HFAM President and CEO. “This new partnership with AMS Onsite adds access to clinical leaders who specialize in detecting, combating, and controlling infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19, in the long-term care sector.”

“Working in concert with our preferred laboratory, CoastalDx, AMS Onsite is dedicated to delivering comprehensive infection control programs to the long-term care community, including testing residents and staff for COVID-19 with results in 24 hours and the ability to process more than 5,000 samples daily at our Arizona Lab,” said AMS Onsite CEO Patrick Britton-Harr. “We have plans to increase testing volume up to 10,000-20,000 samples daily over the next month. We also use data and live analytics to provide actionable insights for clinical teams, further protecting long-term care residents.”

The necessity of broader testing became increasingly evident as skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers, suspecting that outbreaks were larger than they first appeared, began working with hospital partners in mid-April to universally test residents, patients, and staff in nursing homes and found a high percentage of asymptomatic cases of COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 57 percent of older adults who tested positive for COVID-19 did not have symptoms.

All three of Maryland’s post-acute and long-term care associations asked Governor Hogan for universal testing in a letter on April 22, 2020. There are 18,000 licensed nursing home beds in Maryland and 36,000 healthcare heroes providing quality care in nursing homes across the state. Some residents and patients will need to be tested more than once and staff will need to be tested periodically in the months ahead.

“It is critical to keep test results in context and navigate a statewide plan to mitigate challenges that come with increased testing,” added DeMattos. “Mandatory universal testing will cause the number of positive tests in nursing homes to rise and will likely create staffing shortages as workers who test positive are rightfully forced to isolate. We look forward to collaborating with Col. Eric Allely to navigate and effectively adapt to the most successful way forward.”

In the last week, there has been a noticeable increase in testing kits provided by the Maryland National Guard, which is appreciated and critical to success in our fight against the virus. A statewide approach to implementing testing is essential, as the varying approaches being taken across county governments are well intentioned but present challenges. The additional tests from AMS Onsite will help more Maryland nursing homes who have not yet received tests from the State comply with the executive order.

While the long-term care sector has known that this pandemic would create staffing challenges, it is even clearer that with the asymptomatic nature of many positive COVID-19 cases, universal testing could result in increased workforce challenges that will require support from the State-provided Bridge Teams, partnership across healthcare settings, and other innovative solutions.

“Testing of employees in our sector must be done in partnership with the State, be targeted and phased, and cannot be done without having staffing plans in place in advance,” DeMattos said.

AMS Onsite remains readily available to help nursing homes combat and control COVID-19. While more testing with partners such as AMS Onsite likely means more positive cases in the near term, ultimately it will improve skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers’ ability to protect residents and staff by limiting the spread of the virus.

About HFAM:

The Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM) is the oldest and largest nationally affiliated long-term and post-acute care association in Maryland. HFAM represents the majority of the 226 skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers in the state, as well as assisted living communities and affiliated businesses. HFAM members provide nearly 6 million days of care across all payer sources annually to Marylanders most in need of person-centered, medical long-term and post-acute care.

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