

September 3, 2020

Mr. Michael Lauer, MD.
Director, Office of Extramural Research
National Institutes of Health
Office of the Director
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Lauer,

I am writing today to express my support for the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute's (CTSI) grant application for a Testing Research Project through the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics for Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) initiative.

The West Virginia CTSI is an academic institution focused on clinical and translational research that targets priority health areas including addiction and resulting emerging epidemics (such as hepatitis C), cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lung disease. They have existing relationships with the WV Practice Based Research Network (PBRN), a 107 site primary care network; the WV Department of Health and Human Resources; the WV National Guard; West Virginia University (WVU) Health Sciences Center and College of Engineering; WVU Medicine; and the Partnership of African American Churches (PAAC). These relationships situate them well to address the needs of vulnerable populations and rural communities across West Virginia.

As you may know, West Virginia has been found to be the most at-risk state for COVID-19, according to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation study. This is largely due to our elderly population, underlying health issues, and lack of access to care. Additionally, widespread testing remains problematic in West Virginia due to inadequate testing supplies and difficulties many West Virginians face getting to testing sites.

If awarded this grant, CTSI and their partners would be able to perform more COVID-19 testing and do more to address healthcare disparities in particularly vulnerable populations. This includes residents of nursing homes and assisted-living facilities, minority communities, homeless children and families, those living with preexisting conditions, individuals with substance use disorders, and those living in rural areas. It is crucially important that we understand the factors that have led to the disproportionate burden of the pandemic on these underserved populations so that interventions can be implemented to decrease these disparities.

I sincerely appreciate you noting my interest in this application and affording it a full and fair review. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact my office if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Francis Collins, MD