**From:** Brownie W. Newman
**To:** John A Christy
**Cc:** Avril Pinder; Esther Manheimer
**Subject:** Need for non-profit COVID-19 lab in western NC
**Date:** Friday, May 1, 2020 8:26:35 AM

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Drew,

Good morning. Hope you are well.

Thank you for advancing the letter we sent to the Governor regarding the establishment of a non-profit COVID-19 lab for western North Carolina. At this time, we have not received a response to the letter. Do you know if we can expect an answer in the near future?

I want to underline how important this issue is to not just Buncombe County but to western North Carolina. At this time, the proposal outlined by Dr. Graham is the most promising concept we have seen to enable the affordable development of large scale, same-day COVID-19 testing for the mountain region. Currently, we are required to send all of our tests through the mail to labs in cities located outside the region. To do this at large scale is expensive. Sending test kits through the mail means we will never have same-day testing.

For a disease as contagious as COVID-19, the difference in value for getting a test result within a few hours rather than 2- 5 days later can not be over-stated. Effective contact tracing will never be possible if we do not get results until days after the tests are taken.

The other reason this is important to us is that it provides a potentially much more cost-effective approach to large scale testing. Currently, it costs about $60 for each test. To reach the level of testing recommended by the Governor, we need to be doing about 200 tests per day in Buncombe County. At $60 per test, that is $12,000 per day for test results (not counting any of the staffing costs to operate test sites). Over 30 days, that cost is $360,000 per month. Considering that COVID-19 is likely to be with us for a long-time, and that testing levels well above what the Governor has recommended as the near term goal, this will be a very substation cost to taxpayers.

Establishing a non-profit lab in western NC would enable testing to be carried out less than half of those costs.

Thank you for your help on this issue. Please feel free to share this with anyone else in the organization. If there are technical reasons that establishment of such a lab is not a positive idea, we would like to understand the issues.

Brownie Newman,
County Commission Chair

Sent from my iPad