

ASM Statement on the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act

Legislation includes funding to support testing in clinical microbiology labs

April 24, 2020

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) applauds Congress for supporting clinical laboratories with the inclusion of \$25 billion to increase diagnostic capacity for COVID-19 in H.R. 266, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. We also thank Congress for including ASM's request to ensure academic and hospital-based clinical laboratories have access to this critical support.

The ASM membership includes thousands of public health and clinical laboratory microbiologists who are on the front lines of testing for COVID-19. Access to accurate and reliable diagnostics and reporting of test results is fundamental to addressing the pandemic. As we race to develop effective therapies and a vaccine for this novel virus, diagnostic testing is our strongest weapon in identifying the needs of patients and saving lives by limiting spread of the virus.

In addition to funding for clinical microbiologists and clinical labs responding to COVID-19, we appreciate that the bill includes additional funding for federal health and research agencies – the NIH, CDC, FDA and BARDA – to work together on testing research and validation, regulatory science, surveillance, and testing supply manufacturing and production. Everyone who needs a test should be able to get one, and we cannot afford the human cost of rationing diagnostics because of limited capacity, or obtaining inaccurate results from faulty products.

While there is still a lot of work ahead, H.R. 266 is another step to assist our nation in addressing and recovering from this pandemic. ASM will continue to work with Congress, the White House Coronavirus Task Force, and federal health agencies to ensure our nation's response to the pandemic leads with science and public health.

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The American Society for Microbiology is one of the largest professional societies dedicated to the life sciences and is composed of 30,000 scientists and health practitioners. ASM's mission is to promote and advance the microbial sciences. ASM advances the microbial sciences through conferences, publications, certifications and educational opportunities. It enhances laboratory capacity around the globe through training and resources. It provides a network for scientists in academia, industry and clinical settings. Additionally, ASM promotes a deeper understanding of the microbial sciences to diverse audiences.