



Connecticut Department of Public Health

**Testimony Presented before the Public Health Committee
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**Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA
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Senate Bill 223 – An Act Concerning The Timeframe To Complete Newborn Health Screenings

The Department of Public Health (DPH) would like to provide the following information regarding Senate Bill No. 223.

The Department recognizes the critical importance of completing newborn screening (NBS) in a timely manner. In the Public Health Laboratory's (PHL) NBS program, all babies born in Connecticut (approximately 40,000 annually) are screened for conditions involving genetic errors or mutations underlying sixty-six genetic, metabolic and endocrine disorders. These disorders, if not promptly diagnosed and treated in the early neonatal period, can have devastating consequences, including severely restricted functioning and lifespan, permanent disability, and/or rapid decline and death in the neonatal period.

While DPH supports the intent of this bill, we would like to note that a 24-hour turn-around time to issue results is neither technically feasible nor is it realistic given current levels of resources. Additionally, each of the steps in the NBS process requires a finite amount of time that, taken collectively, would exceed 24 hours, even given the allocation of unlimited additional resources. To the best of our knowledge, a 24-hour turnaround does not exist anywhere in the country.

Although NBS testing is normally a single-shift operation, Monday through Friday during normal business hours, the DPH considers NBS an unintermittible and critical function and has plans in place for testing to occur even during prolonged closures. In the event of a State holiday and other non-business day such as a Governor's weather-related closing, additional days of work on an overtime basis are added as necessary to ensure that testing and tracking operations are never down for more than three consecutive calendar days.

In order to significantly reduce turn-around time, the PHL would need to establish additional daily hours of operation, for which resources do not exist at this time, including the need to add staffing and duplicative instrumentation to support operations during an expanded workday, and additional specialized space requirements for staff

and equipment. There would be very significant costs to implement such an expanded program.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.