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**MEMORANDUM**

**Date: February 9, 2021**

**To: State Finance Director**

**From: Bob Phillips, Executive Director, GuideSafe™ Testing**

**Re: Testing for Alabama and GuideSafe™ Program Progress Report for December and January**

The GuideSafe™ Testing program focused its efforts in December on ensuring financial and testing data for the fall semester was up to date and that necessary Calendar Year End activities were completed per the Memorandum of Understanding. In addition, we collaborated with ADPH to distribute approximately 15,000 Abbott BinaxNow rapid tests to interested schools. These tests, which were sent to the state from the federal government, are being used by schools as an additional testing resource to augment the sentinel testing provided by our program, often for symptomatic individuals. Finally, our team also monitored federal government stimulus funding expectations and prepared for spring semester testing with our partner schools.

Among the 30+ participating schools, “return to campus” dates varied throughout the month of January. As such, the reinstatement of sentinel testing at each campus was staggered, allowing our team to focus resources on each school as they “came back.”

Given the significant rise in cases and hospitalizations across the country between Thanksgiving and mid-January, many schools requested increases to their testing frequency and/or volume, and we’ve been able to accommodate those requests. In addition, we have worked with a number of schools to test a higher percentage of returning students who live in campus housing. Given the potential for viral spread within communal living spaces, these increased testing volumes have helped schools minimize COVID spread among their populations.

We are in contact with participating schools every week to review testing data, adjustments to testing invitation protocols, etc. We also meet with our vendor partners at least three times a week and have developed numerous enhancements/improvements to the informatics platform and reporting software.

During the month of January, we collected approximately 17,000 test samples and processed them at our two laboratories at UAB and the University of South Alabama. Since the program’s inception, we’ve conducted over 130,000 tests for students, faculty, and staff at participating schools.