

Gov. Pritzker Celebrates Testing Records as State Surpasses 5 Million Tests, Reports 74,000 in a Single Day

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SPRINGFIELD — At an event in Springfield, Governor JB Pritzker and IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike celebrated the state surpassing 5 million COVID-19 tests since the beginning of the pandemic. The governor and Dr. Ezike also detailed how the state continues to strengthen its nation-leading testing operation as Illinois continues to set new records in daily tests.

“In a pandemic, widely available testing and faster results mean our people are safer,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Here in Illinois, we’ve steadily added new in-state commercial labs and greater hospital and university lab capacity utilization to get to an average of more than 50,000 tests per day. We do three and a half times the testing the average state does. And we’re one of the fastest states in delivering tests back to our residents. I intend for Illinois to remain a leader in the fight against COVID-19, in part by making sure we are on the leading edge of technology and its proliferation throughout the state.”

“Testing is a critical step in reducing the spread of the virus, because a positive test result begins the contact tracing process, which identifies who was exposed and needs to be quarantined to prevent further spread,” said Dr. Ngozi Ezike, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. “Currently IDPH has 11 community-based testing sites around the state, as well as mobile testing teams that are deployed each week to various locations throughout Illinois. Anyone can go there to get tested, or at any state testing site. You don’t have to have symptoms, or a doctor’s referral or order, and there is no cost to you for testing.”

ILLINOIS SETS TESTING RECORDS

On Saturday, Illinois surpassed more than 5 million tests since the beginning of this pandemic – making ours one of the first states in the nation to do so. This benchmark was reached as the state has expanded testing capacity to over 52,000 tests a day on average and as Illinois labs reported more than 74,000 tests in a one-day period over the past weekend – two new highs.

Compared to the rest of the country, Illinois ranks third in the number of daily tests over the last week, behind only California and New York, and currently does 3.5 times the amount of testing than the average state. Illinois tops the Midwest by a large margin, doing 50 percent more testing than the second highest state, even while those states are among the top ten in the nation.

Illinois Department of Public Health labs have been a key part of this effort. The state’s three labs alone have done over 615,000 COVID-19 tests, more than 12 percent of all tests done in the state since the pandemic began. Beginning with a single-day capacity of 219 in March, IDPH labs have been running over 5,000 a day since June, a 23-fold increase in three months’ time.

TESTING OPERATION SPANS EVERY CORNER OF ILLINOIS

As the first in the nation to run its own tests in state, Illinois' testing operation spans approximately 300 locations, including more than 100 Federally Qualified Health Centers which serve the most vulnerable in our communities and 25 state testing sites and teams. In order to respond to outbreaks, the state has mobile testing capacity to reach areas in every corner of the state, including places like meatpacking plants, nursing homes, migrant worker housing and other communities less able to access traditional testing clinics or in areas facing high levels of community spread – like the Metro East where mobile teams are currently deployed.

To continue building on this progress, the state is looking to new methods of testing including more fast-acting antigen testing like Illinois' own Abbott's BinaxNOW, saliva testing like that developed at Illinois' own flagship University campus and continuing to grow our testing targeted at vulnerable communities. As has been the case since the beginning of the pandemic, all state-run testing sites are available to residents free of charge, with no insurance required.