



## *News Release*

**For Immediate Release:**

March 22, 2018

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# **CDC Recognizes Virginia State Laboratory for support of Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria**

*~ DCLS helped with tuberculosis testing when the island's public health lab facilities were damaged ~*

**RICHMOND, VA** – The Department of General Services announced today that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized the department's Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) for its work supporting Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria through testing for tuberculosis, better known as TB.

DCLS, along with the Florida and Georgia state public health laboratories, was named a CDC U.S. TB Elimination Champion for the diagnostic and confirmatory testing the laboratories completed to help the Puerto Rico Department of Health after its facilities were damaged in the hurricane. From the hurricane's landfall on September 20, 2017, through February, the labs tested and reported results for more than 230 specimens, allowing public health officials on the island to diagnose and treat TB cases, and monitor patients currently on treatment, while awaiting the rebuilding and reinstatement of laboratory services.

The recognition comes ahead of World TB Day on March 24. The annual event commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacillus that causes tuberculosis.

"This recognition is special because it shows DCLS' commitment to emergency preparedness and how our skilled scientists serve not only Virginians, but also our partners across the United States during a public health emergency," **DCLS Director Dr. Denise Toney** said.

"We are proud to join our public health partners, health care providers, and community

organizations across the U.S. and around the globe in fighting for the elimination of TB.”

The CDC wrote in its announcement: “Without the collaboration of the public health laboratories and the Puerto Rico Department of Health, TB testing to inform patient care and public health interventions would not have occurred. Establishing relationships internally and externally among organizations with similar missions is key when preparing for potential emergencies in which clinical testing and surveillance could be compromised. This successful collaboration highlights the strong relationships among U.S. public health laboratories and the support available for one another during challenging times.”

In 2016, more than 9,200 TB cases were reported in the United States, including 205 in Virginia. Up to 13 million people in the U.S. are estimated to have latent TB infection, where the infection is present and could become active. TB is a disease caused by germs that are spread from person to person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine. A person with TB can die if they do not get treatment. For more information on symptoms, how to get tested, and how to prevent TB, see the [CDC's Fact Sheet on Tuberculosis](#).

DCLS performs more than 7 million tests annually to identify genetic and metabolic disorders in newborn children and to detect infectious agents and toxic chemicals in humans, animals, the environment, the food we eat and the water we drink.

For more information on DCLS, visit <https://dgs.virginia.gov/dcls/>. For more information on World TB Day and the effort to stop TB, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/worldtbdays/> or [http://stoptb.org/events/world\\_tb\\_day/2018/](http://stoptb.org/events/world_tb_day/2018/).

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