



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Governor O'Malley Announces Plans for New State Public Health Laboratory** *New lab to enhance ability to identify epidemics, bio-terrorism, and other public health threats*

**ANNAPOLIS, MD** (January 20, 2010) – The Board of Public Works today approved an agreement between the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Department of General Services and the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) to begin planning a new state-of-the-art public health laboratory to replace the antiquated and crowded facilities at the State Office Complex on West Preston Street. The new facility— to be built by September 2013—will be located at the East Baltimore redevelopment project known as the Science and Technology Park at Johns Hopkins.

The Board—comprised of the Governor, State Comptroller Peter Franchot, and State Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp—approved the expenditure of \$6.45 million to begin the design phase of the new laboratory, which will help the state respond more rapidly to such public health events as newly emerging epidemics, foodborne outbreaks and incidents of bioterrorism. The laboratory is expected to have a price tag of \$180 million, which will be funded by Lease Revenue Bonds issued by MEDCO and backed by the DHMH lease.

"The new public health lab will advance our goal of providing Maryland families the best public health service and protection that modern science and technology can offer," said Governor O'Malley. "This state-of-the-art facility maximizes our abilities to protect the health and well-being of all Marylanders under a creative financing agreement that minimizes the cost to taxpayers."

As a member of the national Laboratory Response Network, the State laboratory acts as an early warning system for public health threats and shares this information with other state and federal agencies so that threats such as the drug resistance to H1N1 influenza can be identified, tracked, and quickly contained.

"As the H1N1 (Swine) flu experience clearly demonstrated, the public health laboratory is the backbone of Maryland's public health system," said John M. Colmers, DHMH Secretary. "The investment we are making today will provide Maryland families with decades of protection against disease and illness."

The structure will be a significantly more efficient building than the old facility that opened in 1974. The new laboratory will provide a 29 percent increase in useable space over the current facility, growing from 100,000 net assignable square feet to 129,000 net assignable square feet, while decreasing the actual gross square footage from the current 227,000 to an estimated 200,000 gross square feet. It will have 41 high-level biosafety laboratories, an infrastructure to support sophisticated instruments and equipment, and more sophisticated levels of security.

The new facility will be financed through the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), an instrumentality of the State created by the General Assembly to assist private and government agencies in expanding and modernizing existing enterprises in Maryland. Forest City-New East Baltimore Partnership, a nationally recognized developer of laboratory facilities and chosen by East Baltimore Development, Inc. as the developer for the Science and Technology Park at Johns Hopkins, will be the developer for the new public health laboratory.

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