**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 44‑29‑260 SO AS TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL TO ENSURE TESTING PRIORITIZATION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS WHO PRESENT WITH SYMPTOMS OF COVID‑19.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 29, Title 44 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 44‑29‑260. (A) In order to lessen the risk of health care‑associated infections and to maintain the integrity of the United States health care system, the Department of Health and Environmental Control shall require and ensure Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID‑19) testing prioritization for first responders who present with symptoms of COVID‑19. Testing prioritization includes prioritization for the collection of specimens for testing and prioritization for completion of the associated laboratory testing process and the reporting of results.

(B) For purposes of this section:

(1) ‘Coronavirus Disease 2019’ or ‘COVID‑19’ means the respiratory illness caused by the SARS‑CoV‑2 coronavirus.

(2) ‘First responder’ means:

(a) any law enforcement officer, paramedic, emergency medical technician, firefighter, medical resident, medical trainee, trainee of a first responder as defined herein, and any other person, including employees of a legally organized and recognized volunteer organization without regard to whether an employee receives compensation, who in the course of his professional duties responds to emergencies;

(b) any person licensed as a health care provider under Title 40, a person registered under the laws of this State to provide health care services, an employee of a health care facility as defined in Section 44‑7‑130, or an employee in a physician’s office;

(c) any member of the South Carolina National Guard activated to respond to the COVID‑19 public health state of emergency; or

(d) any employee of a correctional institution, facility, or program located in this State including, but not limited to, correctional institutions, facilities, and programs operated by the South Carolina Department of Corrections and the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice.

(3) ‘SARS CoV‑2’ means severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, the virus that causes COVID‑19.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑