

Following hours of debate, state lawmakers approved \$23 million dollars to go toward improving the Arkansas Department of Health's efforts to track the spread of the coronavirus. Members of the Arkansas Legislative Council today (Tues) approved two separate requests for federal CARES Act funds. One provides \$7 million dollars to the nonprofit Northwest Arkansas Council to enhance contact tracing, testing and outreach to minority populations. The legislative panel had previously declined to consider that funding request, but at today's (Tues) meeting, Republican Senate President Jim Hendren underscored the urgency of addressing the COVID-19 outbreak in the state's Marshallese community.

News01

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"...it is this."

Numerous lawmakers spoke against the request, including Republican Rep. Robin Lundstrum of Springdale, who questioned the efficacy of the state's contact tracing.

News02

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"...to a phone call."

The funds will go to the Northwest Arkansas Council to form a coalition with UAMS Northwest and other clinics to help outreach to Latinx and Marshallese communities in six Arkansas counties. Lawmakers also approved \$16 million dollars to go toward the Health Department's statewide contact tracing efforts.