

**MUR 7605 - Supplement****RECEIVED**

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

**From:** [Larry Price](#)  
**To:** [CELA](#)  
**Subject:** MUR 7605 - Additional Information  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 05, 2020 3:21:31 PM  
**Attachments:** [CEO of Raleigh NC based Mako Medical tied to campaign money](#) [Raleigh News & Observer.pdf](#)

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AUGUST 5, 2020 3:21 PM

**OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL**

RE: MUR 7605

Complainant: Larry D Price

Respondent: Chad E Price

I am asking that the attached document be included with the Complaint filed by me in May 2019, MUR 7605. The pdf file attached is a story that was investigated and published in the North Carolina, Raleigh News and Observer paper. I feel it may assist you when the Complaint is reviewed,

After months of Investigation, Dan Kane, Investigative Reporter with the N&O ran a story on February 6, 2020. The story is about Chad Price's \$17,500 in campaign contributions illegally made to many candidates in many states. One of those candidates was Judson Hill, Congressional Candidate representing Georgia. Mr. Hill's campaign received \$2,700 in contributions from Jessica Price.

Jessica Price is my severely disabled daughter and sister of Chad Price. Chad is Jessica's Guardian and she lives with him. I find it appalling that he would take advantage of his disabled sister to only benefit himself and his business and make campaign contributions in her name, Jessica is now a 38 year old adult with the cognitive skills of a 3 to 4 year old. She is totally incompetent to make such decisions.

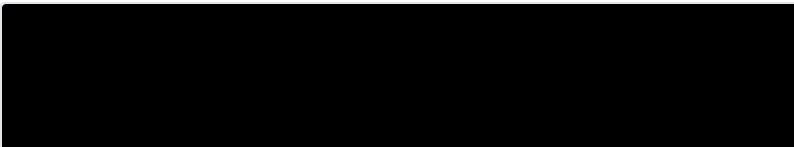
**FEC strictly prohibits Campaign Contributions made in the name of others**

I am also providing a link to the actual story that has video and audio which I strongly recommend viewing. To access may require a monthly subscription to the paper, which is well worth the \$1.99.

Sincerely

Larry Price

[On paper, she's a lab employee and a campaign donor. The reality is far different.](#)





**On paper, she's a lab employee and a campaign donor. The reality is far ...**

Campaign records show a medical company employee from North Carolina helped fund candidates in four states. But ...



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\$2,700

to Judson Hill,  
a congressional  
candidate in Georgia.

8/29/2017

Campaign records show a Mako Medical Laboratories company employee from Apex helped fund political candidates in four states. But she isn't an employee, and the money isn't really from her. BY KEVIN KEISTER



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RALEIGH

*This is the first of two articles about Mako Medical CEO and campaign donor Chad Price. [The second article](#) looks at the inflated qualifications he submitted to government agencies.*

Chad Price says Mako Medical, the fast-growing lab testing company he co-founded in Raleigh, started with frustrations he faced getting his younger sister the medical tests she regularly needed.

His sister Jessica, 37, was born with a genetic condition that left her with the mental capacity of a young child. She lives with Price, who is her legal guardian, at his home in Apex.

## With riders coming back, Amtrak resumes Piedmont train service in North Carolina

But in campaign filings, Jessica emerges as an administrative employee for Mako and a political donor, contributing \$17,500 to five state or federal candidates in four states, including North Carolina. For three of those candidates, Chad Price had made the maximum contributions in his own name.

Those contributions are among hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign money flowing predominantly to Republican candidates from Chad Price and a small group of people and businesses connected to him over the past five years. During that time, Price developed deep connections with state elected and appointed officials, two of whom joined his businesses.

Price's contributions and correspondence with government officials reveal his growing influence in state politics and show the challenges regulators face enforcing a level playing field in election campaigns.

In those five years of campaign giving, Mako grew from a small lab in North Raleigh to a 55,000-square-foot facility in Henderson that was purchased and renovated with help from \$5.2 million in state and local incentives.

Mako Medical CEO Chad Price with one of the diagnostic machines at the company's Henderson facility. Dan Kane *THE NEWS & OBSERVER*

Price also won a seat on Wake Tech's Board of Trustees and a state Division of Motor Vehicles contract to operate a license plate agency in Holly Springs. And a top state

Records obtained by The News & Observer show Price submitted qualifications for the Wake Tech position and the license plate agency that inflated his educational attainment. His resume for the Wake Tech job also shows a vice president position for Ford Motor Co. that he never held.

Federal law and laws in all of the states in which Price made contributions in his sister's name — Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky and West Virginia — prohibit giving in the name of another. The penalty for violations of those laws typically range from a low-level felony to a misdemeanor.

Those state and federal laws provide transparency on campaign giving, and try to curb individuals and companies from having unfair influence over candidates who, if elected, could potentially reward contributors.

"When people evade those transparency rules by funneling money through another person, not only are they potentially violating contribution limits, they are making it harder for those violations to be detected and they are depriving the public of that information," said Erin Chlopak, a director with the [Campaign Legal Center](#), a nonpartisan campaign watchdog organization. She was speaking only about the law, not the Mako-related contributions.

<b>GEORGEY DUNCAN (R), GA LT.GOV.</b>		<b>\$20,400</b>
Tim Moore (R), NC House District 111		\$26,000
Donna White (R), NC House District 26		\$25,500
NC Republican Council of State Committee Building Fund		\$25,000
NC Republican Council of State Committee		\$25,000
Sig Hutchinson (D), Wake County Commissioner		\$20,600
Dan Forest (R), NC Lt. Gov.		\$17,100
<b>Nelson Dollar (R), former NC House member</b>		<b>\$15,500</b>
Mary Taylor/Nathan Estruth (R), OH Gov/Lt. Gov (Lost in 2018 primary)		\$12,707
Jefferson Griffin (R), Candidate for NC Court of Appeals		\$10,600
<b>Stephen Knipper (R), KY Sec. of State candidate in 2019</b>		<b>\$10,000</b>

## OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS IN QUESTION

Mako is headquartered in North Raleigh, and has reported roughly 500 full and part-time employees working in nine states. Triangle Business Journal named it the region's fastest-growing company three years in a row. In late 2017, the company reported paying more than \$30 million in taxes and earning more than \$100 million in sales in its first three years.

Chad Price has tight connections with Republican politics, even though state records show he hasn't voted in an election since 2013. That year he lost a campaign in which he sought a seat on the Apex Town Council.

Campaign finance records show he began making contributions in early 2012. Since then, most of the money has gone to Republican candidates, though in recent years he stepped up his giving to Democrats.

Price founded Mako with Josh Arant, a former aide to Republican Gov. Pat McCrory. They have said in several published reports that they met at a Bible study held by longtime state Supreme Court Justice Paul Newby, a Republican, and both knew little about the health-care industry. Price had started several other businesses over the years, and was the vice president of Cary Reconstruction Company, a business that specialized in disaster cleanups before it was sold to a larger company.

The campaign contributions attributed to Price's sister are not the only campaign records that raise questions. Jennie Price, a Black Mountain resident who appears unrelated to Chad Price, denied contributing \$2,000 to a Kentucky candidate early last year. She also denied knowing a Jason Price who is listed in campaign reports at her address as her husband and a lab director for Mako. The reports show he also

Bob Hall, the retired longtime executive director for Democracy NC, said election officials should scrutinize the contributions in Jessica Price's name, the amount of campaign money connected to Chad Price and the inconsistencies in how the money has been reported.

"It definitely fits a pattern of someone who is pushing a large amount of money through multiple donors, whether they are being reimbursed, whether it's his money or whether he's convincing them to give their own money," Hall said. "But it is a pattern that I have seen in cases that do involve corruption."

He said investigators need to focus on the entirety of campaign giving across multiple state and federal elections instead of looking at each election on its own.

#### **DONATION DISALLOWED**

Chad Price confirmed in a phone interview with The News & Observer that he made the contributions on behalf of his sister, who he acknowledged has no income.

In addition to the five candidates listed as recipients in campaign reports, Price said he also made a \$1,000 contribution in his sister's name to another state candidate in West Virginia, but it was erroneously reported as from Mako employee Jay Price, who does not exist. Chad Price had also given \$1,000 to that candidate, which was the maximum allowed under West Virginia law.

Former North Carolina state Rep. Nelson Dollar of Cary was among the five recipients. His reports showed he received \$5,200 each from Jessica and Chad Price on the same day, Oct. 24, 2018. Dollar's report shows Jessica Price as working in "medical administration" for Mako.

Chad Price said candidates' campaigns advised him it was OK to give that way, but North Carolina officials told him roughly nine months ago they had disallowed the donation to Dollar.

"They weren't 100% sure, but they said, you know, there's a statute that says you can't give on behalf of somebody else, so the campaign has to forfeit the money back to the state," he said.

Price said he had not intended to mislead anyone.

"It's not like I was trying to hide it," Price said in a phone interview. "I thought it was perfectly fine. I'm her advocate in every other area of her life."

He blamed the campaigns for putting incorrect information in their election reports such as his sister working for Mako and listing his home as the address for several others who gave.

"The campaigns are the ones that put the addresses in," he said. "They do all the campaign finance reports and they put all the information in."

& Observer that he had been contacted by a West Virginia investigator recently. He said he did not know Jessica Price, and didn't want to comment further while the contribution was being looked into.

"It sounds like an investigation is ongoing about donation irregularities, and I've pledged to do anything I can to assist in that," Baldwin said.

Nelson Dollar *FILE PHOTO*

Dollar, who had served as a top budget writer in the NC House until he lost re-election in 2018, said he had not seen anything unusual in Jessica Price's donation. Though he said he had limited knowledge of her disability, he thought the money came from her and that she was working for Mako.

"That's my understanding is that she has some relationship with Mako Medical," he said. "The details of that I don't know."

In a follow-up interview, Dollar said he had spoken with Price and corrected the campaign report to remove her occupation and employer. He said the contribution was made with a credit card via a web-based fundraising portal, which asks contributors to fill out the required information.

Chad Price had made his contribution to Dollar using the same card, Dollar said. He said he assumed Price made the contribution on his sister's behalf because he is her guardian.

#### **GOP CONNECTIONS, FAILED LEGISLATION**

The contributions under Jessica Price's name are among roughly \$560,000 in campaign money connected to Chad Price that has gone to state and federal candidates or political committees in eight states since 2015, campaign finance records show. He has contributed \$323,000 in his name, through his sister or through businesses that he owns. The rest came from family and business associates.

Most of the donations went to candidates in states where Mako does business — North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Georgia, West Virginia and Kentucky. Price said Mako also does business in Florida, Indiana and New Mexico.

More than a dozen of those contributions made by family and business associates of Chad Price list his home address, campaign reports show.

Much of the \$560,000 went to the campaigns of roughly 15 candidates, most of them Republicans. Senate leader Phil Berger received a \$5,200 contribution from Price, while Moore received \$26,000 from Price and his family and business associates.

Chad Price and another Mako executive, Daniel Watkins, each gave \$5,000 to Roy Cooper, a Democrat, after election results showed him with what later turned out to

Two years later, Price sought help from Stam, who then was House speaker pro tem. [WRAL reported](#) that Stam unsuccessfully sought to add a provision to insurance legislation under consideration in a House judiciary committee meeting that would boost Mako's reach in the lab testing market.

The provision would have given doctors more authority in choosing lab testing services, and loosened the control insurance companies such as Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina have. The legislation didn't make it out of the committee.

Paul "Skip" Stam *FILE PHOTO*

Stam left the legislature in 2016, and is an attorney in Apex. He said Price, who lives in his former district, sought the legislation, and Stam thought it was a good idea because it would help level the playing field for smaller companies.

Stam said Price didn't manage any of his campaigns as Price had indicated in his email to Tata. Price did robocalls.

"He didn't in any way, shape or form manage my campaign, but he was helpful," Stam said.

Stam said seeking the legislation had nothing to do with Price's campaign help. Price had also given Stam's campaign \$1,750 in contributions in 2012.

Mako grew despite the legislative setback. The company won approvals from insurers, including Blue Cross NC, which handles the State Health Plan, and recently boasted on a billboard along the Raleigh Beltline that more than 50,000 doctors had switched to using Mako.

### **BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS**

Price's business contributions went to two South Carolina Republican candidates who won election in 2018: [Gov. Henry McMaster](#) and state [Attorney General Alan Wilson](#). Six businesses that Price owns or co-owns are reported as giving maximum contributions of \$3,500 to McMaster in the 2018 election, while five are listed as giving to Wilson. Price had also given maximum contributions to those campaigns in his own name.

Credit card statements Price provided showed contributions for four of those businesses came from an account in his name. He did not dispute making the contributions out of that account, saying the candidates' campaigns told him he could.

South Carolina law [allows businesses to make campaign donations](#), even when their owners have given the maximum allowed, and even if the contributions are coming from multiple businesses with the same owner. But the law is murky as to whether

Knoop, a spokesman for Wilson's campaign, said it was reviewing the contributions and "we do everything to the letter of the law."

John Crangle, the longtime former director for Common Cause in South Carolina, said the federal decision created a massive loophole for individuals to pour tens of thousands of dollars into South Carolina campaigns by creating shell companies. But he questioned whether it was legal for contributors to claim the money came from businesses they own when it came from their personal accounts.

"It's a question that needs to be litigated," Crangle said.

In one of those cases involving Price's businesses, Mako Genomics, the business listed in the campaign accounts, had been dissolved eight months before McMaster's and Wilson's campaigns each received a \$3,500 contribution in October 2018. Price confirmed he wasn't the owner of another business, Response Team One, that also was listed as giving \$3,500 to McMaster's campaign in September 2017. He said those contributions should have been reported from Mako Logistics.

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## **A FAMILY BATTLE**

The N&O in May became aware of Price's campaign contributions through his parents, Larry and Susan Price of Clayton, who have filed election complaints in the states where their son contributed in his sister's name, and to the Federal Election Commission for the contribution involving a congressional candidate in Georgia. Their complaint involving a state candidate was dismissed by Georgia officials. Other state and federal officials say they can't comment on any complaints that are being investigated.

The couple is locked in a bitter battle with their son over the custody and care of their daughter Jessica. Chad Price won custody of her after alleging substandard care by her mother. At that time, Larry and Susan Price had separated.

His parents say they are incensed that their son used their daughter's name to funnel more money to candidates. He says their complaints are an attempt to get back at him for winning custody of their daughter. Court records show Chad Price's two other siblings supported his gaining custody. Larry Price didn't oppose his son taking custody temporarily, the records show, but he then sought custody and was denied.

Chad Price has pointed to several mistakes in his parents' election complaints, but he said he's also since contacted candidates he contributed to so they can correct misinformation in their election reports.

One of them is Jerry Bynum of Apex, who owns JLB Construction and Great White Medical Services, a company that specializes in renovating medical offices. JLB did construction work for Mako, and Price worked for other companies Bynum owned in the past. One of Bynum's companies, Bynum Properties 3, owns the North Raleigh building on Garvey Drive that serves as Mako's headquarters.

Price is also a partner in Bynum Properties 3, which lists Mako's headquarters as its address.

Campaign finance records show Bynum, his family members and businesses that include Bynum Properties 3, gave nearly \$140,000 to the same candidates to which Price has donated, all in the past two years. That includes a \$25,000 contribution from Great White to the [N.C. Republican Council of State Committee](#) on Dec. 31, 2018. The committee is led by Lt. Gov. Forest, a candidate for governor.

Campaign records show Price giving another \$25,000 contribution as "owner" of Great White. He said that is incorrect, and that he reported to the state elections board that Bynum made the contribution.

Great White's \$25,000 contribution was listed as a business contribution to the Republican Council of State Committee, which isn't allowed under state law. Days later, the committee moved the money to its building fund, which can accept business donations.

Jerry Bynum and his brother Jim, who made a \$1,000 contribution to a West Virginia candidate, are each listed as living at Chad Price's home address.

Jerry Bynum said in telephone interviews that he is not influenced by Price, but Bynum noted that Price is "closely allied" with people Bynum supports.

"I've been blessed," Bynum said, "and I'm trying to give back to people I believe in and causes that I believe in."

Campaign finance reports filed after that interview show Speaker Moore's campaign in June had returned three \$5,200 contributions from Bynum, his wife Stephanie, and brother Jim from the 2018 election. Moore's campaign treasurer, Amy B. Ellis, confirmed the contributions had been refunded, but declined to explain why.

Chad Price's younger brother, Adam, showed The News & Observer a credit card report indicating that he and his wife, Amanda, gave \$38,500 to the same group of candidates as Chad Price. Adam Price is Mako's head of logistics. Six of those contributions list Chad Price's home address.

"I'm a conservative, Christian, combat veteran with a disabled sister," Adam Price said in an email message to The News & Observer. "I support people that have at least one out of 4 things in common, or if I have met an individual at an event and taking a liking to."

Commerce records also show Project Mikey needed special approval from the Commerce Department's Economic Investment Committee because the state's \$3.7 million cost exceeds a state cap based on 75% of state income taxes the new Mako jobs are expected to generate for the state as part of the expansion.

The total cost of the state and local incentives — \$5.2 million — averages out to \$33,753 per job, roughly two-thirds of the \$51,987 average annual wage Mako has agreed to pay to the new hires.

Mako's application for the incentives said North Carolina was facing incentives competition from Louisiana, Ohio and South Carolina, with Louisiana making an offer worth \$6.5 million.

"The company has stated that an award at this level is critical to North Carolina's consideration as the project location," a Commerce report to the committee said.

Louisiana is far from Mako's customer base, and the Commerce documents note the company would use the incentives to establish a new one. There were no specific proposals from South Carolina and Ohio.

Mako listed Gov. McMaster as the contact for South Carolina incentives. By then, Price and others connected to the company had given McMaster's campaign \$52,500, records show.

#### **FORMER OFFICIAL HELPS**

Mako paid John Skvarla to help represent Mako's application for the North Carolina incentives. Skvarla served as McCrory's commerce secretary in his final two years of office, which ended in January 2017. Skvarla is also a partner in the Bynum Properties business with Bynum and Price, which purchased the Henderson building. Commerce records show Vance County and Henderson contributed \$450,000 to the \$750,000 purchase price.

Skvarla said in an interview that he became an investor in Mako shortly after leaving the Commerce Department and he sits on the company's board of advisors. He said the company officials' political contributions "didn't get them a damn thing." Nor did Skvarla's role as a representative to his former agency carry additional weight, he said, because he was dealing with a Democratic administration.

"This had nothing to do with me," Skvarla said. "This had to do with the fact that Vance County and others wanted this company desperately, because there were other offers from other counties."

"This is a good company with good people, doing good things, building good jobs and creating real value," Skvarla said.

State Budget Director Charlie Perusse is one of the five members of the committee that decides who wins the incentive grants. He works for Cooper, and said the

Mako touts its community service and hiring from the military. One [trade news publication reported](#) the company had donated \$26 million to charity; Price clarified to the N&O that figure includes free services as well as money.

Raleigh based Mako Medical Laboratories. Kevin Keister *KKEISTER@NEWSOBSERVER.COM*

### **WEAK ENFORCEMENT**

Officials with the election boards in South Carolina, West Virginia and North Carolina said they can't comment as they investigate complaints. The board in Kentucky didn't return messages from The News & Observer. Robert Lane, a spokesman for Georgia's election board, said the Prices' complaint against their son was unfounded. He said the money "almost absolutely" came from a financial account in Jessica Price's name.

That may raise concerns that Chad Price was improperly spending his sister's money in acting as her guardian, Lane said, but that's not a matter for the election board.

Myles Martin, a Federal Election Commission spokesman, acknowledged receipt of the complaint against Chad Price, but said the commission can't discuss pending complaints. He also said the FEC's board lacks a quorum, which means it can't resolve enforcement matters.

How much Price's campaign activity gets scrutinized may depend on how much the authorities in the states and at the FEC pay attention to what happened elsewhere. Taken state by state, the contributions could draw little more than a misdemeanor, civil fines, or a warning if proven to be in violation.

Denise Roth Barber, managing director of the National Institute on Money in Politics, a [nonpartisan nonprofit that tracks campaign spending](#) at the state and federal level, said most states have weak campaign enforcement and don't investigate possible violations of another state's laws.

"The key here is just to keep in mind that these agencies are, by and large, underfunded and understaffed," she said.

And in at least one of those states — South Carolina — the law prevents those who file complaints from talking about them while they are being investigated.

Shortly after The N&O began asking election officials and McMaster's and Wilson's campaigns about Price's contributions in South Carolina, Larry Price said he received a phone call. It was from a South Carolina investigator, who asked whether he had shared his complaint with a reporter and informed him it could be a criminal offense.

### **BEHIND OUR REPORTING**

**BUSINESSES** that made contributions to South Carolina candidates, or held commercial properties being used by Mako.

The amount of money given in the past five years — roughly \$560,000 — showed Chad Price to be a big player in campaign circles. We then filed public information requests into his connections with state and local government, and found a resume and an application for an NC DMV contract that inflated his qualifications.

Price talked with us on the phone initially and consented to give us a tour of Mako's lab-testing facility in Henderson, which received state and local incentives, but then declined further interviews. He answered some follow-up questions via email, but hasn't responded to more recent email and phone requests.

We also interviewed, or sought to interview, several others involved in the contributions, regulators for state and federal election agencies, and campaign finance experts.

The campaign activity and the exaggerated qualifications are important for the public to know. Campaign contributions are closely tracked to make sure contributors don't have a secret, outsized influence on the public's business. Those seeking state or local board positions or government contracts are also expected to provide accurate information about their education and experience to show they are worthy of doing the public's business.

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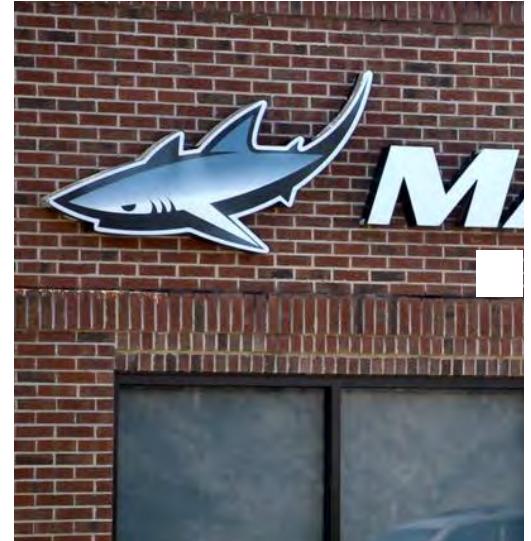
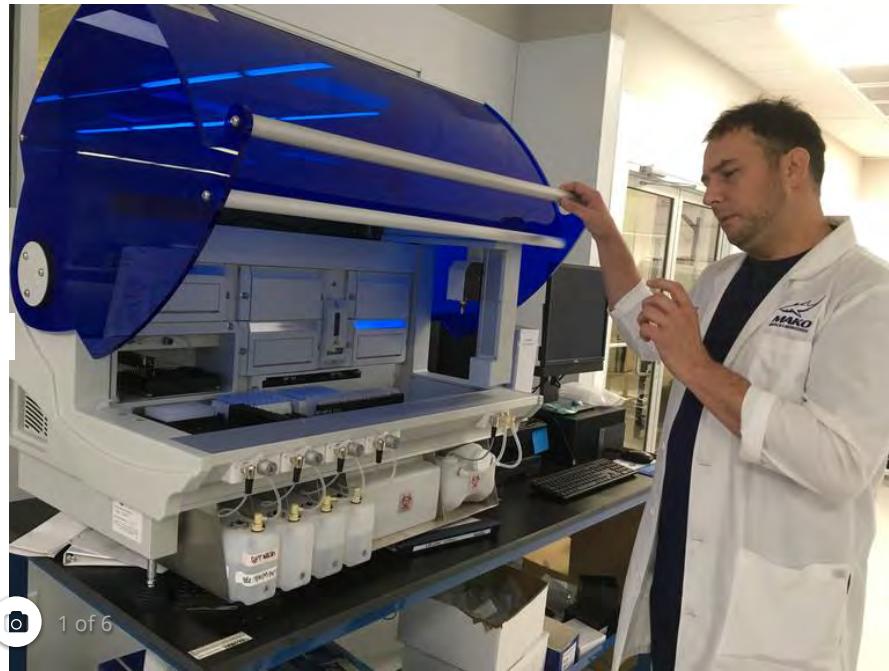
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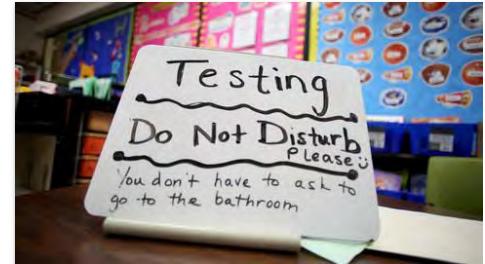
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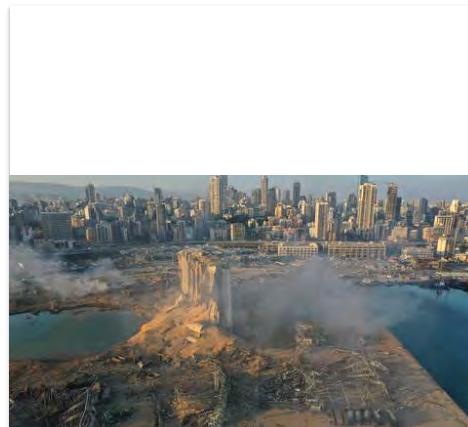
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