



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 370 – Maryland Department of Health – Study on the Effects of and Preparedness for Long COVID–19 – Letter of Concern

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of opposition for House Bill (HB) 370 - Maryland Department of Health – Study on the Effects of and Preparedness for Long COVID–19. This bill requires the Department, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Labor and the Department of Human Services, to conduct a study related to long COVID–19, including the preparedness of health facilities in the State to respond to viral illnesses and the effects of post–viral illnesses resulting from long COVID–19.

The Department acknowledges the significance of Long COVID/Post-COVID Condition and its impact. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) established the Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery (RECOVER) Initiative to explore the effects of Long COVID through various types of research studies that are working to better understand the condition, as well as treatment and prevention options.¹ A number of these research studies are based in Maryland and are looking at the specific impacts on Maryland residents. These RECOVER Initiative studies will likely address many of the issues the study required by this bill seeks to address. These studies are currently underway and will provide the general understanding of Long COVID that is a necessary precursor to any state specific reviews.

In addition to concerns that this study would be premature, the Department does not currently have the available staff, resources, expertise, or data required to perform the study mandated by this bill. Additionally, the development of facility preparedness guidance and treatment protocols for the mental, physical, and behavioral effects of Long COVID, as required by the bill, exceeds the Department’s current capabilities.

This bill will have a significant fiscal impact on the Department since contracted services will be necessary to conduct the mandated research study. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

¹RECOVER Initiative: <https://recovercovid.org/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.

Secretary