

Subject: SB0392 – FAV

Name: Norio Honjo

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Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Norio Honjo, and I am writing in support of SB0392, the Long Covid Innovation Grant & Loan Program. Although I live in Japan, Long Covid is a global crisis, and the experiences of patients worldwide demonstrate the urgent need for investment in research and innovation.

Prior to 2020, I had never experienced any major illness and had no significant medical history. On February 13, 2020, I attended a one-hour meeting at a café near Tokyo Station to discuss canceling a planned trip to China. I believe this was when I contracted COVID-19. At the time, I never imagined that the virus had already entered Japan.

Initially, I assumed it was only a mild cold and took over-the-counter medication. However, instead of improving, my condition gradually worsened. I became increasingly unable to move, and eventually I could no longer get out of bed. There were three separate occasions when I genuinely feared for my life.

Although my condition has somewhat improved since the onset, I remain largely bedridden. Because of this illness, the company I had built collapsed, and the past six years of my life have effectively been lost.

Long Covid has taken the health, livelihoods, and futures of millions of people worldwide. Yet research funding, clinical trials, and therapeutic development remain far behind the scale and urgency of the crisis. Patients like myself have very few treatment options and live with constant uncertainty.

In Japan as well, many Long Covid patients lack adequate medical support and access to appropriate care. Many are forced to manage their symptoms alone, with limited access to specialists or evidence-based treatment. This global pattern underscores the urgent need for scientific progress and innovation.

Programs such as SB0392 would accelerate the development of diagnostics and treatments, foster scientific collaboration, and provide hope to patients who currently have none. Maryland's leadership in biomedical innovation could have a meaningful impact not only locally but globally.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge you to support SB0392 and help advance solutions for the millions of people living with Long Covid.

Sincerely,

Norio Honjo