

Hi, my name is Joshua Smith, and I'm writing in support of HB0027. Long COVID is a significant problem facing the American public as is COVID in general. Americans who completely recover from COVID face a reduction of 3 iq points on average, while Americans who classify as having long COVID experience a reduction of 6 iq points on average, with each subsequent infection further reducing their intellectual capacity.<sup>1</sup> This is because although the COVID virus is known for infecting the lungs, it can still cause brain inflammation remotely. In some individuals, it can also disrupt the brain-blood barrier, which normally isolates the brain from harmful pathogens and toxins, allowing the virus passage into the brain.<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, about 7% of Americans had long COVID syndrome.<sup>2</sup> In 2026, that has only dropped to 5.7%.<sup>3</sup> Besides a disturbing reduction in performance on iq tests, long COVID includes people who have developed debilitating auto immune conditions as a result. A 2023 study found that people who contracted COVID had a 3 times greater chance of developing an auto-immune condition in the 6 months afterwards, compared to those who did not contract COVID.<sup>4</sup>

Researching Long COVID requires long term funding and will not see immediate results, however, COVID also has not gone away, with over 100,000 Marylanders still getting infected per week<sup>5</sup>, and with many of those people developing life-long complications. Therefore, even though Long COVID studies or treatment trials can take months or years to conclude, it will still have a positive effect on the American public. Furthermore, because our understanding of auto-immune conditions is so low compared to conventional diseases, investigating how COVID can trigger them will lead to health benefits for Americans in general. In addition, by understanding more about the effects of COVID, we will increase our resilience against future natural or man-made viruses.

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Sources -

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