

WRITTEN TESTIMONY HB 27 / SB 392 - FAVORABLE

Maryland Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program (TEDCO)

Bill: SB 392 / HB 27

Position: Favorable

Submitted by: Cheryl Lohman, MD, Independent Long COVID Advocate and Researcher

To: Finance Committee

Hearing Date: February 12, 2026

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and esteemed member

The Problem

Long COVID is affecting roughly half a million people in Maryland. State studies confirming these numbers will be available soon. A Harvard economist, David Cutler, estimates the economic cost to the United States at \$3.7 trillion. Similar disability numbers from countries like the Netherlands and Germany, published in 2026, show that Long COVID is an expensive, global issue.

I have spoken with military officers, doctors caring for military members and their families, and the service members themselves. Long COVID is impacting US military readiness.

The Tragedy and Opportunity of Long COVIDp

About 25% of people with Long COVID are bedbound, and at least half can't work as they did before. This removes people from the workforce and demands more caregivers for them. Currently, there are no FDA-approved tests, treatments, or cures for Long COVID. This makes Long COVID a major societal tragedy. However, this also presents a significant economic opportunity to develop these necessary solutions.

Current Status of Research and Development

The causes of Long COVID include persistent spike protein in organs, leading to ongoing inflammation. Other factors include autoimmune issues, problems with blood vessels and clotting, gut issues, and mitochondrial dysfunction. Appendix A shows a table.

Long COVID isn't a single condition. It's made up of at least four main types, identified by the Patient Lead Research Collaborative (PLRC) and the NIH RECOVER program. This complexity has slowed down diagnostic progress because of a lack of funding to link known causes of disease with known symptoms, like brain fog and post-exertional malaise (PEM). This makes it hard to select patients for clinical trials. Currently, there are no FDA-approved tests for Long COVID, and validated biomarkers are scarce.

The Solution

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is currently testing four potential treatments: low-dose naltrexone, baricitimib (a Jak 1-2 inhibitor), a weight loss drug called a GLP-1, and stellate ganglion block. The NIH considered over 50 potential treatments during the \$500 million RECOVER TLC program, but they were not chosen due to funding constraints. It's important to note that clinical trial outcomes heavily rely on patient questionnaires currently. All agree, this is suboptimal.

Team TEDCO Leverages Maryland Businesses and Institutions

Maryland is a leader in developing FDA-approved diagnostics, treatments, and cures. We are a "superpower" in this area. The Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) is the driving force behind this. HB 0027 leverages TEDCO's capabilities to translate research into valuable technologies, benefiting the state's economy.

Start-up companies often start the work of developing diagnostics and treatments. TEDCO provides support to these companies. Successful start-ups attract millions in funding from venture capital firms.

Other measurable outcomes for TEDCO would be increased awareness among Maryland biotech companies to enter this field. This expands Maryland's economy by creating more jobs. HB 0027 also attracts federal funding to the state by supporting important institutions like Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland.

TEDCO can boost the competitiveness of research scientists for federal grants from the NIH and ARPA-H. Other successful programs have shown this. Congress has recently signaled its support for NIH funding to address Long COVID and disability. Testimony supporting this is available from other sources.

The Opportunity

HB 0027 allows TEDCO to create a program focused on translating the known underlying causes of Long COVID into diagnostics, treatments, and cures. This is a huge market that will be open wide to the first companies to enter. This is a chance to lead.

Call to Action



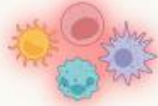


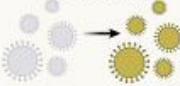


Voting "Yes" on HB 0027 will position Maryland to play a key role in finding solutions for Long COVID.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Lohman, MD

Friday, February 6, 2026

APPENDIX A

Biological mechanisms of Long COVID		
	Research testing	Therapeutics for evaluation
Acute infection (prevention) 	COVID-19 testing Viral dynamics	Vaccination COVID-19 antivirals Monoclonals Metformin Anti-inflammatories Anti-platelet drugs Anticoagulants
Virus persistence 	Blood antigen Blood PCR Tissue biopsy	Vaccination (therapeutic) COVID-19 antivirals Monoclonals
Post-acute inflammation 	Blood markers (e.g., CRP) Cellular immunology Proteomics Radiographic imaging PET imaging Tissue biopsy	JAK/STAT inhibitors Interleukin inhibitors Inflammasome inhibitors Checkpoint inhibitors Rapamycin
Autoimmunity 	Blood markers (e.g., ANA) Autoantibody testing B cell testing	IVIG Plasmapheresis B cell depletion
Thrombosis 	Blood markers (e.g., fibrinogen, D-dimer) "Microclot" assays	Anti-platelet drugs Anticoagulants Thrombolytics Plasmapheresis
Latent virus reactivation 	EBV PCR EBV serology EBV cellular assays VZV assays HHV-8 assays	Antivirals (e.g., ganciclovir) EBV cellular therapies
Dysbiosis and gut translocation 	Microbial markers (e.g., B-glucan, LPS, zonulin) Fecal microbiota	Probiotics Larazotide Fecal transplant
Mitochondrial dysfunction 	Mitochondrial proteins Reactive oxygen species Muscle biopsy	Amino acids N-acetylcysteine Metformin

Peluso MJ, Deeks SG. Mechanisms of long COVID and the path toward therapeutics. *Cell*. 2024 Oct 3;187(20):5500-5529. doi: 10.1016/j.cell.2024.07.054. Epub 2024 Sep 25. PMID: 39326415; PMCID: PMC11455603.