

HB0027: Maryland Technology Development Corporation - Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program

Position: FAV

February 6, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee,

We are Patient-Led Research Collaborative, an international group of people with Long COVID whose mission is to improve the breadth, depth, and speed of global research into Long COVID. We write in **strong support (FAV) of Delegate Greg Wims's proposed legislation HB0027 establishing the Maryland Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program.**

Long COVID is defined by symptoms persisting at least three months following a SARS-CoV-2 infection; it is a debilitating chronic illness that can affect anyone, independent of age, sex, race or SARS-CoV-2 vaccination status.¹ Long COVID is a public health crisis, affecting 4% of children and 10-26% of adults following a COVID infection,² and disproportionately impacting women and trans people, Black and Latino people, and disabled people.^{3,4,5} Recovery from Long COVID is rare, with only 6-9% of people with Long COVID having recovered at 2-3 years.^{6,7,8} Likely because of the

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2024. *A Long COVID definition: A chronic, systemic disease state with profound consequences*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/27768>.

² Mandel, Hannah et al. Long COVID Incidence Proportion in Adults and Children Between 2020 and 2024: An Electronic Health Record-Based Study From the RECOVER Initiative. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Volume 80, Issue 6, 15 June 2025, Pages 1247–1261, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaf046>.

³ Khullar, Dhruv et al. Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Post-acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 Infection in New York: an EHR-Based Cohort Study from the RECOVER Program. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 38, 1127–1136 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-022-07997-1>.

⁴ Glassman, Brian. Hispanic, Black Adults More Likely to Report Long COVID-19 Symptoms. United States Census Bureau. May 1, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/05/long-covid-19-symptoms-reported.html>.

⁵ Long COVID Household Pulse Survey. National Center for Health Statistics. Aug 20 - Sep 16, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/long-covid.htm>.

⁶ Mateu, Lourdes et al. Determinants of the onset and prognosis of the post-COVID-19 condition: a 2-year prospective observational cohort study. *The Lancet Regional Health – Europe*, Volume 33, 100724. 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanepe.2023.100724>.

⁷ Gottlieb, Michael et al. Differences in Long COVID severity by duration of illness, symptom evolution, and vaccination: a longitudinal cohort study from the INSPIRE group. *The Lancet Regional Health – Americas*, Volume 44, 101026. 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2025.101026>.

⁸ Van Wambeke, Erika et al. Two-Years Follow-Up of Symptoms and Return to Work in Complex Post-COVID-19 Patients. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*. 2023, 12(3), 741; <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm12030741>

cumulative effects of reinfections, the risk of Long COVID is higher in recent years relative to 2021, when Omicron first appeared.⁹

There is presently no FDA-approved treatment for Long COVID and patients experience severe functional limitations, poor quality of life, and extreme fatigue at least as detrimental as many serious illnesses, including Parkinson’s disease and certain cancers.¹⁰ This substantially impacts patients’ livelihoods, with most being unable to work or needing reduced hours: after two years, only 40% of Long COVID patients could work full-time,¹¹ and 52% had reduced work hours, losing an average of 25% of their monthly income.¹² This leads to elevated rates of housing and food insecurity, and difficulty paying bills.¹³¹⁴¹⁵

Consequently, Long COVID has a massive impact on the economy. In 2024, 1.5 billion work hours were lost in the US due to Long COVID, corresponding to an estimated cost of more than US \$152.6 billion.¹⁶ Five years of Long COVID burden are projected to cost the US \$3.7 trillion in lost earnings, increased medical spending, and reduced quality of life.¹⁷

Maryland has an opportunity to start reversing the economic and societal cost of Long COVID with the Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program. By investing in

⁹ Mandel, Hannah et al. Long COVID Incidence Proportion in Adults and Children Between 2020 and 2024: An Electronic Health Record-Based Study From the RECOVER Initiative. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Volume 80, Issue 6, 15 June 2025, Pages 1247–1261, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaf046>.

¹⁰ Walker, Sarah et al. Impact of fatigue as the primary determinant of functional limitations among patients with post-COVID-19 syndrome: a cross-sectional observational study. *BMJ Open* 2023;13:e069217. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-069217>.

¹¹ Van Wambeke, Erika et al. Two-Years Follow-Up of Symptoms and Return to Work in Complex Post-COVID-19 Patients. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*. 2023, 12(3), 741; <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm12030741>

¹² Kwon, Joseph et al. Impact of Long COVID on productivity and informal caregiving. *European Journal of Health Economics*. 2023 Dec 26;25(7):1095–1115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10198-023-01653-z>.

¹³ Packard, Samuel E. and Susser, Ezra. Association of long COVID with housing insecurity in the United States, 2022–2023. *SSM - Population Health*, Volume 25, 2024, 101586, ISSN 2352-8273, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2023.101586>.

¹⁴ Datta, Biplab Kumar et al. Long COVID and the Higher Risk of Food Insecurity Among Participants and Nonparticipants of Food Assistance Programs in the United States. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, Volume 125, Issue 4, 555 - 566. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2024.07.171>.

¹⁵ Karpman, Michael et al. Employment and Material Hardship among Adults with Long COVID in December 2022. The Urban Institute. July 20, 2023. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/employment-and-material-hardship-among-adults-long-covid-december-2022>.

¹⁶ Baxa, Miranda. An incomplete picture: understanding the burden of long Covid. *Economist Impact*. 28 Apr 2024. <https://impact.economist.com/health/incomplete-picture-understanding-burden-long-covid>.

¹⁷ Cutler, David. The Economic Cost of Long COVID: An Update. Harvard University. July 2022. https://cutler.scholars.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnuum5891/files/cutler/files/long_covid_update_7-22.pdf.

high-yield industries that Governor Wes Moore has identified as lighthouse sectors—healthcare, technology, and advanced manufacturing—the Program will create high-paying Maryland jobs addressing one of the state’s largest unmet healthcare markets. The Program has high potential to attract further industry investment in biotechnological research and development, meeting the urgent demand for development of diagnostics, treatments and cures for Long COVID.

Modeled after the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund (MSCRF) and administered by the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO), the Program builds on Maryland’s strength as a leading science, health and technology hub, supporting further growth of a highly trained and skilled professional workforce in the state. And critically, at a time when federal investment in biomedicine has stalled, the Program will make Maryland a national leader in advancing science for millions of Long COVID patients, hastening the day when an FDA-approved treatment relieves Maryland families and the Maryland economy of Long COVID’s burden.

At the forefront of scientific progress, the bill provides for “develop[ing] criteria, standards and requirements for the review of applications for a program grant or loan”: this creates an opportunity to further accelerate the Program by involving people with Long COVID throughout, per the expert recommendation published in *Nature Medicine* in 2024 that “Policies supporting research should explicitly mandate meaningful patient engagement in research from inception to implementation.”¹⁸ Specifically, we recommend giving patients an equal decision-making position in reviewing, evaluating, ranking and rating research proposals. This will maximize the impact of Program grants and loans by ensuring supported projects respond to the lived experience of Long COVID.

The Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program is a win-win opportunity to grow the Maryland economy and bring hope to the Maryland families affected by this debilitating illness. We thank you for your consideration and urge you to **support HB0027, establishing the Maryland Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program.**

Sincerely,

Patient-Led Research Collaborative

¹⁸ Al-Aly, Ziyad et al. Long COVID science, research and policy. *Nature Medicine*, 30, 2148–2164 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-024-03173-6>.