

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 27 / SB 392

Maryland Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program (TEDCO) Bill: HB 27 (House) / SB 392 (Senate)

Position: FAVORABLE

Submitted by: Dr. Mark Camenzind, International R&D Advocate to Cure M.E., Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/cfs/Long Covid

To: Health Committee Hearing Date: February 10, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee

Dr. Mark Camenzind and my wife Dorothy Hassler, MD, Pediatrician, respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of HB 0027 / SB 0392.

Our 32yr old son has been disabled by severe ME/cfs since 2014 and is homebound.

He was formerly a Straight A Stanford Student, Eagle Scout, in perfect health.

Thus I am an International R&D Advocate to Cure ME/cfs, caregiver, and supporter of SolveME.org that drives research, policy, and advocacy for myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) and related infection-associated chronic conditions (IACCs), including the large and growing population of people with Long COVID. My son has seen over 50 doctors for his illness at huge costs. We know many in Maryland with ME/cfs/Long Covid and related illnesses. We have participated in clinical and R&D studies.

Many people living with these conditions are facing profound losses in daily function, stability, and ability to participate in the workforce. We also support MEAction.net and follow NIH, RECOVER carefully, but progress has been much too slow..

Too often, patients encounter a health system with limited answers and few evidence-based options. Advancing research in this field will dramatically decrease long term health costs and increase workforce participation. A strong Maryland model with national implications Maryland has a unique advantage here. TEDCO already has an established approach to fostering innovation and helping early-stage ideas grow. This bill builds on that proven infrastructure rather than starting from scratch. It also creates an opportunity to demonstrate what public-private partnership can accomplish in Long COVID and related IACCs. This legislation is also structured to use existing infrastructure to distribute potential private gifts, with the possibility that lawmakers may later consider adding public funding through the state budget. That approach can help Maryland build an early proof of concept and show what is possible when a community aligns around a shared goal. We have seen how state-based investments in other disease areas have produced real scientific progress over time. Maryland has the opportunity to do something similarly catalytic for Long COVID and IACCs, while also strengthening an ecosystem that supports entrepreneurs and researchers working on solutions. If Maryland demonstrates results, this becomes a replicable model other states can adopt, inspiring forward progress across the country. Why this bill matters to patients HB 0027 / SB 0392 is compelling because it is designed to function like an engine for practical solutions. It directs TEDCO to establish a Long COVID Innovation Grant and Loan Program and creates a dedicated Maryland Long COVID Research Fund, building on the success of similar programs which have helped advance progress for other illnesses. The bill also includes safeguards that patients care about. It calls for independent scientific peer review, conflict-of-interest protections, and annual reporting so Marylanders can see what is funded and what outcomes follow. That kind of transparency and rigor helps build trust that investments will prioritize meaningful results. We and Solve M.E. strongly supports legislative efforts that move the science forward across IACCs. We also want to underscore one patient-centered priority that must not be missed: ensuring research into post-exertional malaise (PEM) is emphasized. PEM is central to the lived experience of ME/CFS and affects many people with Long COVID. Research that rigorously investigates PEM and translates findings into diagnostics, treatments, and clinical guidance is among the highest-impact investments Maryland can help accelerate. Community strength and readiness We also want to recognize the tenacity and skill of the Maryland advocacy community that have helped move this bill forward. We are committed to ongoing engagement that helps steer this investment toward scientific projects that deliver real benefit for patients and families.

Request

For these reasons,we respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 27 / SB 392. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your leadership on Long COVID and the broader category of infection-associated chronic conditions