

HB0027

Position: FAV (Favorable)

Testimony by:

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I serve as a community organizer to 20,000 members across 13 science, technology, and entrepreneurship open community groups (<https://www.mocomakers.com/our-groups/>). Most of our activities are in Maryland, and I can speak to the technological innovation potential in our area.

My work is rooted in grass-roots community building, connecting innovators, researchers, and entrepreneurs. Given my role in Maryland's innovation ecosystem, I strongly support this legislation. By running events (including with university partners and VCs partners) I see firsthand the innovation capacities we offer, and they could use the help offered in this bill.

Maryland is uniquely positioned as one of the highest educated populations among states, and we have unique access to national laboratories, federal resources, and the biotech corridor – but supporting innovators earlier in the pipeline is still needed. Developing new ideas is needed (especially for Long Covid) as is supporting innovators as they move their work into the biomedical pipeline

I approach this ecosystem more from a grass-roots community perspective, and I see enormous and growing potential in our region. I lead events in AI, hackathons, volunteer computational biology, and business mentoring. What I see in all aspects of my role is a hunger to apply talent to a need.

The timing is right. Advances in AI (not just for coding but for learning) now allow us to analyze data in new ways and empowers researchers with advanced information earlier in their careers. For Long Covid this means that complex disease patterns (the disease presents in complex ways – similar to how different types of cancers must be treated differently) – can be targeted with more nuanced solutions using emerging techniques:

- AI/large language model approaches
- knowledge graphs
- clustering algorithms
- bioinformatics

- other big data statistics

At the heart of this is a need for innovation and experimentation that better suits smaller innovators – rather than larger players that can scale up solutions.

Pharmaceutical companies face challenges in incentivizing treatment for Long Covid, because they must approve (through the FDA) a treatment to a single indication – that is a specific symptom set. However Long Covid presents as a large class of symptoms and is cost-prohibitive in focusing on for therapy development. That's not to say all pharma players are out of this huge issue – I know at least a dozen people personally with what seems like life-long Long Covid – but the class of research needed most right now is at the early innovation stages. This is where new paradigms, or experimental approaches with big upsides can be smoothly tested and deployed.

I opt in to support the efforts of this proposed legislation, and I see strong value in helping those patients who often have not even enough energy to advocate for themselves (a possible symptom of Long Covid).

Regards,

Matthew Zamora

Director,

MoCo Maker Labs – Montgomery County's largest DIY tech community