

Thank you to the committee for allowing me to share my thoughts on an important issue-Long COVID. First, I want to acknowledge that many people with Long COVID are unable to write or travel to share their experiences with you due to how disabling the disease is.

My name is Terri Wilder, the chair of #MEAction Minnesota, and a person living with ME/CFS (<https://www.meaction.net/learn/what-is-me/>). I know first-hand the impact of having a disease that's underfunded and under-researched. It can destroy your dreams and quality of life. I'm determined to prevent others from experiencing the same thing.

It's estimated that 10-20% of all Minnesotans who got COVID-19 have experienced Long COVID symptoms. This suggests there are potentially hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans with Long COVID who are experiencing significant impacts to their health, functionality, and quality of life, AND that includes children, adolescents, and young adults.

It's estimated that around 50% of people with Long COVID meet the clinical criteria for the disease I have... ME/CFS. This disease is a disabling and complex disease that impacts multiple body systems. ME/CFS is a neurological disease, according to the World Health Organization.

I also want to highlight that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, and other non-white communities, as well as low-income, rural, disabled, and elder populations. Epidemiologic surveys and investigations are needed to understand the impact of Long COVID in these communities and to address specific concerns and needs.

Federal efforts around Long COVID have been slow and do not provide the needed resources to establish action and infrastructure at the state and community level. That's why the Long COVID funding proposed in the Governor's budget is critical. This funding will raise awareness of Long COVID and develop and implement up-to-date statewide consensus guidance for Long COVID diagnosis, treatment, and care coordination. It will also co-design tools and resources to support people with Long COVID, their families, primary care providers, public health practitioners, schools, employers, and local communities.

Supporting this funding is the right thing to do. It's critical that these dollars be made available to support and expand the Minnesota Department of Health's work around Long COVID, as well as to ensure that funding is funneled into community based organizations providing services to those impacted by Long COVID.

Thank you again for your attention to this matter. We have an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Minnesotans with Long COVID and set an example for states across the country. I urge you and your colleagues to support this funding.

Thank you,

Terri L Wilder, MSW

Chair, #MEAction MN

www.meaction.net