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September 4, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Sanders:

[The American Association of Immunologists \(AAI\)](#),* the nation’s largest organization of immunologists and scientists in related disciplines, is pleased to offer its support for your recently introduced legislation, the Long COVID Research Moonshot Act (S. 4964). As you know, the need for research on this condition is urgent. In some instances, people are unable to work, attend school, or perform basic daily functions. In 2022, an [estimated 8.9 million adults and 362,000 children](#) in the U.S. reported Long COVID symptoms. This is likely an underestimate given the challenges of accurately quantifying the impact of Long COVID, including underreporting and a lack of validated biomarkers. There are currently no curative treatments or diagnostics that can definitively diagnose patients experiencing Long COVID symptoms, which range from mild to debilitating.

AAI believes that it is vital for any Long COVID Research Program to support studies that span the research spectrum, including understanding the fundamental immunological mechanisms of the condition. Foundational and translational research are necessary to understand Long COVID and inform the development and evaluation of new therapies. Therefore, we appreciate that the first Program activity described in the legislation emphasizes foundational research with its aim to “investigate the etiology, pathophysiology, risk factors, and pathology of Long COVID in adults and children.”

AAI would also like to highlight a conclusion from a recent [Consensus Study Report](#) by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) in June 2024: “Complex, infection-associated chronic conditions affecting multiple body systems are not new, and Long COVID shares many features with such conditions as myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. Current theories about the pathophysiology of these conditions include immune dysregulation, neurological disturbances, cardiovascular damage, gastrointestinal dysfunction, metabolic issues, and mitochondrial dysfunction. More research is needed to understand the natural history and management of complex multisystem chronic conditions, including Long COVID.”

As NASEM makes clear, Long COVID is not the first post-acute infection syndrome and will likely not be the last. AAI believes it is crucial for this



