



Targeting Resources for Equitable Access to Treatment for Long COVID (TREAT Long COVID) Act

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) and Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)

BACKGROUND

Over the course of the pandemic, millions who had COVID-19 have been suffering from the prolonged health impacts known as Long COVID.¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people with Long COVID may experience a combination of symptoms, ranging from extreme fatigue and cognitive dysfunction (otherwise known as 'brain fog'), to muscle pain and gastrointestinal issues, to difficulty breathing, insomnia, and heart palpitations.² Although there is no official count of people suffering from this condition, a conservative estimate of only ten percent of documented COVID-19 survivors could mean nearly 8 million people are impacted across the United States. Due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black, brown and other historically marginalized communities, experts have warned of similar disparities with Long COVID.³

People battling Long COVID require and deserve accessible and affordable medical care and treatment. Currently, there is no federal program focused on expanding treatment options for this specific growing population. The absence of specialized support contributes to patients experiencing greater physical and mental anguish, disruption in employment and education, and reduced quality of life.

The TREAT Long COVID Act is much needed legislation that will direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide dedicated grant resources for the expansion of Long COVID Clinics. These grants will fund and empower health care providers, including community health centers, rural health clinics, Indian Health Service, and state and local public health departments, to treat patients in their own communities who are struggling with Long COVID.

The TREAT Long COVID Act:

- Authorizes HHS to award grants up to \$2,000,000 to health care providers, including community health centers;
- Grants funding for the creation and expansion of multidisciplinary Long COVID clinics to address the physical and mental health needs of patients;
- Prioritizes funding for health providers that plan to engage medically underserved populations and populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19;
- Ensures that treatment is not denied based on insurance coverage, date or method of diagnosis, or previous hospitalization;
- Encourages ongoing medical training for physicians in Long COVID Clinics and other health care workers serving patients; and
- Requires grantees to submit an annual report on its activities that includes evaluations from patients.

¹ Also, referred to as Post-COVID Conditions and Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC).

² *Post-COVID Conditions*. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (Sept. 16, 2021), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/index.html>.

³ *PASC Dashboard*. THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION (Feb. 21, 2022), <https://pascdashboard.aapmr.org/>.