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House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
“The Long Haul: Forging a Path through the Lingering Effects of
COVID-19”
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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Madam Chair, ...and thank you to our witnesses for participating and sharing your expertise today.

LONG HAULERS

The long-term effects of COVID-19 that some patients are experiencing is incredibly concerning.

Many patients have reported “long-hauler” symptoms like

- Fatigue
- Brain fog
- Heart palpitations and chest pains
- Shortness of breath and
- Impaired memory

Some have even experienced mental illness, such as psychosis.

A University of Washington study found that nearly one-third of COVID-19 patients have reported symptoms that can persist for several months.

This alarming statistic highlights the sheer scale of the potential next wave of this pandemic.

We must have a better understanding about the causes and treatment for long-term COVID-19 symptoms.

I’m grateful that because of the success of Operation Warp Speed and the historic public-private partnerships ...

... America led to develop safe and effective vaccines that are key to beating this pandemic and restoring our way of life.

The COVID-19 vaccines—and getting them in the arms of every American who wants them—are vital for prevention and stopping people from become long-haulers in the first place.

JOE'S STORY

The Seattle Times recently shared Joe's story in my district.

He was infected with COVID-19 last year and has a pre-existing lung disease that subsided with treatment.

Inflammation from the virus devastated his lungs, brought his underlying condition back, and caused irreversible damage.

He said, "I went from being able to walk a mile quite easily, to barely being able to walk to the restroom with oxygen."

Now, a lung transplant is his only option.

Unfortunately, there is no diagnostic mechanism for long COVID and there are limited treatment options.

While there are still outstanding questions about this phenomenon, health providers and researchers across the country...

...including, many in my state of Washington...

... are working hard to investigate this poorly understood condition.

WASHINGTON

Researchers at Seattle's Institute for Systems Biology are collaborating with local health care providers to study and detect viral fragments of infection through blood tests.

The purpose of the study is to learn more about the virus, how the body fights it, and the impact of infection on different organs.

Other experts in my state are part of the INSPIRE study, which is a national collaboration conducting applied research to investigate the long-term outcomes of COVID-19.

I am encouraged by this American leadership and ingenuity, and I am hopeful that medical experts will soon be able to deliver hope to patients who so desperately need it.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the lives of so many Americans.

As we safely and responsibly reopen and get a vaccine to every American who wants one....

.... we cannot lose sight of the toll COVID19 has on long-hauler patients.

As we work to crush this pandemic, these patients deserve answers and the best care possible.

I am looking to learning more today about what needs to be done to help provide relief for patients experiencing these debilitating symptoms.

Thank you and I yield back.