Dear Chair Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2023 Defense Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include language to keep Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, commonly referred to as ME/CFS, in the list of Congressionally Directed Topic Areas in the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP), and to set aside $5 million within PRMRP for research on Long COVID and ME/CFS with a focus on military populations.

Although the causes of ME/CFS remain unknown, evidence suggests symptoms can be triggered by extreme systemic stress and exposure to viruses or environmental factors such as neurotoxins – situations and circumstances active duty servicemembers are commonly and more likely to experience.

Most Americans have had COVID-19 and a substantial number experience long-term symptoms called “Long COVID”.¹ In July of 2022, the CDC published an analysis showing 1 in 5 American adult COVID survivors under the age of 65 are experiencing symptoms consistent with Long COVID², forcing an estimated 4 million people out of the labor force and many more to work with debility at any given time.³ The broader economic impact has been estimated at $3.7 trillion, due to reduced quality of life, lost earnings, and medical costs.⁴

Also, COVID-19 is associated with the development of other infection-associated chronic conditions, including ME/CFS. It has been estimated that the number of Americans with ME/CFS has increased sixfold since the pandemic began as a result of COVID.⁵ People with ME/CFS report substantial impairment⁶ and an estimated 25% are confined to their homes or completely bed bound.⁷ For many, it is a lifelong illness. The cost to families and larger society is profound: current ME/CFS prevalence estimates translate to $149 to $362 billion in medical expenses and lost income, exclusive of other costs, such as disability benefits, social services, and lost wages of caretakers. The cost to our military readiness, veterans, and their families could be even more significant as viral infections trigger more and more cases.

We thank you for the consistent inclusion of ME/CFS as a PRMRP Congressionally Directed Topic Area and ask that you provide $12 million in dedicated funding to match the urgency and need around understanding the prevalence and impact of ME/CFS and Long COVID. It is critical
that our response to the pandemic include steps to prevent and control lasting repercussions from COVID, along with efforts to stem the spread of the disease. Again, we appreciate your leadership on this issue and thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN
Member of Congress


