

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 26, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Francis Collins
Director
National Institutes of Health

Dear Secretary Becerra and Dr. Collins:

On March 8, 2021, I wrote to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Director of National Intelligence requesting records relating to the efforts undertaken by both agencies to determine the origins of SARS-CoV-2 (“coronavirus”). In response, I received intelligence product that causes very serious concern and further supports my belief that the Biden administration must engage in an all-hands-on-deck investigation with respect to the origins of the coronavirus. We must also get to the bottom of the communist Chinese government’s potential role. Although I received intelligence product, the Director of National Intelligence failed to provide a full and complete response.

On May 21, 2021, I received a letter response from the Department of Health and Human Services. Your letter also failed to provide a full and complete response; namely it failed to provide any data relating to scientific research performed by the government to better understand the origins of the coronavirus; failed to describe the steps the Department of Health and Human Services has taken to further incorporate itself into the Intelligence Community; and failed to describe the steps the Department of Health and Human Services took to oversee the research done at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in light of it being funded by the taxpayer. If your agencies are not privy to certain intelligence information that you require to answer my questions, Congress needs to know.

Furthermore, your letter noted that the National Institutes of Health awarded a grant to EcoHealth Alliance, which made sub-awards to the Wuhan Institute of Virology and “other

institutions based in East Asia” where coronaviruses are prevalent.¹ The project was called “Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence.”² Your letter also noted that the project was intended to study several coronavirus characteristics:

The research proposed in the grant application sought to understand how bat coronaviruses evolve naturally in the environment to become transmissible to the human population. This included studying viral diversity in bat reservoirs, surveying people who work in live animal markets or other jobs with high exposure to wildlife for evidence of bat-coronavirus infection, and analyzing data to predict which newly discovered viruses pose the greatest threat to human health.³

According to the link provided in your letter, the project dates to 2014 and the administering agency was the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. The project ended in 2019 and total spending was \$3,748,715.⁴ However, your letter failed to note what steps were taken to oversee that spending and research.

It’s been well-understood for many years that the communist Chinese government is a bad actor and cannot be trusted. With millions of dollars sent to the Chinese government, the taxpayer and Congress expects you to perform aggressive oversight of that spending and its resulting research projects to ensure that they are not used for malign activities, especially when the funded research involves highly infectious and deadly viruses. Furthermore, if no oversight was performed, then that would call into question the government’s confidence that no gain of function research was supported by taxpayer dollars.

Over 500,000 Americans have lost their lives and the federal government has spent trillions of dollars due to the pandemic. If the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases failed to perform any oversight of the grants used to study bat coronaviruses and similar viruses – money that was given to the Wuhan Institute of Virology – the American people have a right to know.

¹ Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence, Project Number 2R01AI110964-06. <https://reporter.nih.gov/project-details/9819304>

² Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence, Project Number 2R01AI110964-06. <https://reporter.nih.gov/project-details/9819304>

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.* It’s been reported that the Wuhan Institute of Virology received approximately \$600,000 of this funding. See Samuel Chamberlain, *Fauci admits ‘modest’ NIH funding of Wuhan lab but denies ‘gain of function’*, New York Post (May 25, 2021).

In light of your failure to fully respond to my March 8, 2021, letter please provide a more detailed response no later than June 9, 2021. Specifically, I request that you address each question with a corresponding answer with an emphasis on what, if any, oversight was done on the relevant grants to track where the money went and the type of research that was performed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary