

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Rockville, M.D. 20892

Dr. Anthony Fauci
Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
5601 Fishers Lane, MSC 9806
Bethesda, M.D. 20892

Dear Directors Collins and Fauci:

House Republicans are investigating the origins of COVID-19. We are particularly interested in a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant awarded to EcoHealth Alliance (EcoHealth), which subsequently awarded funds to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).¹ Under this grant, EcoHealth and the WIV conducted studies on emerging coronaviruses—like COVID-19, their potential for human-to-human transmission, and the risk of a new pandemic.² There is mounting evidence the COVID-19 pandemic started in the WIV, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) covered it up.³ If U.S. taxpayer money was used to develop COVID-19, conduct gain of function research, or assist in any sort of cover-up, EcoHealth must be held accountable.

EcoHealth has awarded almost \$600,000 dollars to the WIV and another \$200,000 to the Wuhan University School of Public Health. On July 8, 2020, NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research Dr. Michael Lauer sent a letter to EcoHealth expressing concern over its relationship with the WIV and suspended EcoHealth's grant pending answers to several routine

¹ Grant from U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Nat'l Inst. Of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, to EcoHealth Alliance Inc., R01AI110964 (June 1, 2014), https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_R01AI110964_7529.

² Josh Rogin, *State Department cables warned of safety issues at Wuhan lab studying bat coronaviruses*, THE WASH. POST (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/14/state-department-cables-warned-safety-issues-wuhan-lab-studying-bat-coronaviruses/>.

³ Michael R. Gordon, Warren P. Strobel, and Drew Hinshaw, *Intelligence on Sick Staff at Wuhan Lab Fuels Debate on Covid-19 Origin*, WALL ST. J. (May 23, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/intelligence-on-sick-staff-at-wuhan-lab-fuels-debate-on-covid-19-origin-11621796228>.

questions.⁴ The questions posed by Dr. Lauer raise serious concerns and suggest COVID-19 was spreading worldwide by October 2019. Specifically, Dr. Lauer asked EcoHealth to:

1. Explain the disappearance of Huang Yanling, a scientist who worked in the WIV but whose online presence has since been deleted;
2. Disclose and explain out-of-ordinary restrictions on laboratory facilities, such as diminished cell-phone traffic in October 2019 and roadblocks surrounding the WIV from October 14-19, 2019;
3. Explain the 2012 deaths of three Chinese mine workers from a viral illness, in the WIV collection, with symptoms remarkably similar to COVID-19; and
4. Allow a U.S. government-led inspection of lab facilities and lab records at the WIV regarding COVID-19, including collection of animals.⁵

These questions suggest that EcoHealth knew of the CCP's attempts to cover-up the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic and failed to act or inform the U.S. government. When asked if EcoHealth and WIV could have lied to the government, Dr. Fauci, you said, "I cannot guarantee that . . . because you never know."⁶ The actions of both EcoHealth and the CCP must be thoroughly investigated.

This investigation is more urgent now considering the recent report that, according to U.S. intelligence sources, three researchers from the WIV became ill and sought hospital care in November 2019.⁷ Dr. Lauer's letter suggests that the first cases of COVID-19 occurred even earlier—in October 2019. However, the CCP did not report any COVID-19 cases until December 2019. Based on this new timeline, it is likely COVID-19 was circulating worldwide three months before anyone outside of China was informed of its existence.

Despite U.S. intelligence concerns about the ability of the WIV to properly contain the deadly diseases—including the virus that causes COVID-19—they study, EcoHealth still awarded U.S. taxpayer grant funds to the WIV.⁸ Intelligence reports stated, "during interactions with scientists at the WIV laboratory, [U.S. officials] noted the new lab has a serious shortage of

⁴ Letter from Dr. Michael Lauer, Deputy Director for Extramural Research, U.S. Nat'l Inst of Health, to Drs. Aleksei Chmura & Peter Daszak, EcoHealth Alliance Inc. (July 8, 2020).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *National Institutes of Health's FY22 budget and the State of Medical Research: Hearing Before Subcomm. On Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related agencies, S. comm. On Appropriations*, 117th Cong. (May 26, 2021)(statement by Dr. Anthony Fauci).

⁷ Gordon, *supra* note 3.

⁸ Grace Panetta, *US officials were reportedly concerned that safety breaches at a Wuhan lab studying coronaviruses in bats could cause a pandemic*, BUSINESS INSIDER (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-officials-raised-alarms-about-safety-issues-in-wuhan-lab-report-2020-4>; Sarah Owermohle, *Trump cuts U.S. research on bat-human virus transmission over China ties*, POLITICO (Apr. 27, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/27/trump-cuts-research-bat-human-virus-china-213076>.

appropriately trained technicians and investigators needed to safely operate this high-containment laboratory.”⁹ This is alarming.

To prevent future pandemics, Congress is obligated to conduct robust oversight of grant recipients, both current and historic. It is incumbent upon grant recipients to ensure their work is performed within the scope of the grant, advances our national interest, and protects our national security. It is vital to understand if U.S. taxpayer funds were at all affiliated with a pandemic that has taken the lives of nearly 600,000 Americans so we can prevent similar future catastrophes.

To help us better understand the relationship between the U.S. government and EcoHealth and EcoHealth’s ties to the WIV, please provide the following information as soon as possible, but no later than June 11, 2021:

1. All documents and communications between NIH and EcoHealth regarding grant R01AI110964.
2. All documents and communications between NIH and WIV regarding grant R01AI110964.
3. All documents and communications pertaining to or resulting from any U.S. government-led inspection of the WIV arranged by EcoHealth.
4. All documents and communications regarding Potential Pandemic Pathogen Care and Oversight Committee review of R01AI110964.
5. All documents and communications regarding gain of function research funded by EcoHealth or any other U.S. entity.

In addition to these documents, please provide a staff-level briefing as soon as possible but no later than June 4, 2021. To schedule the briefing or ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

⁹ *Id.*

The Honorable Francis Collins
Dr. Anthony Fauci
May 28, 2021
Page 4

Sincerely,

James Comer

James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Jim Jordan

Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

Enclosure: Letter from Dr. Michael Lauer to EcoHealth Alliance on July 8, 2020.