

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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Majority (202) 225-5074
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May 24, 2023

Mr. Lawrence Tabak, D.D.S., Ph.D.
Acting Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, M.D. 20892

Dear Acting Director Tabak:

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic (Select Subcommittee) is investigating the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Pursuant to that investigation, we are evaluating the National Institutes of Health (NIH) interactions with the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), including its funneling of U.S. taxpayer dollars to the WIV through U.S. based institutions without proper oversight.² The Select Subcommittee is now the only Committee in Congress with explicit jurisdiction to conduct this wide-ranging and important investigation.

On August 15, 2019, the NIH awarded a grant entitled, “Genetically Engineered Anterograde Monosynaptic Viral Tracers for Multi-Species Neutral Circuit Analysis,” to the University of California, Irvine (Irvine).³ Pursuant to this grant, on December 17, 2019, Irvine made a subaward to the WIV.⁴

According to documents in possession of the Select Subcommittee, on May 20, 2020, the NIH wrote to Irvine notifying it that the NIH was “suspending all activities...for which the Wuhan Institute of Virology is a subaward participant...” (enclosed).⁵ According to the letter, “the National Institutes of Health (NIH) ha[d] been made aware of reports that Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) [sic] has been conducting *research at its facilities in China that pose serious bio-safety concerns* and, as a result, health and welfare threats to the public, both in China and

¹ Letter from Hon. Brad Wenstrup, et. al., Chairman, Select Subcomm. on the Coronavirus Pandemic, H. Comm. on Oversight & Accountability, to Hon. Xavier Becerra, Sec’y, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Servs. (Feb. 13, 2023).

² See generally THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH AND ECOHEALTH ALLIANCE DID NOT EFFECTIVELY MONITOR AWARDS AND SUBAWARDS, RESULTING IN MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO OVERSEE RESEARCH AND OTHER DEFICIENCIES, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. DEPT. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS. (Jan. 25, 2023).

³ Genetically Engineered Anterograde Monosynaptic Viral Tracers for Multi-Species Neutral Circuit Analysis, RF1MH120020 (Aug. 15, 2019).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Letter from Michael Lauer, Deputy Dir. Extramural Research, Natl. Insts. Of Health, to Mark Bouronnais, Director Research Support Servs., School of Medicine, University of Cal., Irvine (May 20, 2020).

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other countries, including the United States.”⁶ The NIH continued, “[i]t is the NIH mission to protect public health and welfare from a serious deficiency such as unsafe laboratory practices.”⁷

Six days later, pursuant to the NIH’s request, Irvine suspended operations with the WIV, stating the “WIV must stop work effective immediately on any and all activities supported by the Subaward.”⁸

To further the Select Subcommittee’s investigation, we request the following documents and information as soon as possible but no later than June 7, 2023:

1. All documents and communications regarding the May 20, 2020 letter from National Institutes of Health to University of California, Irvine.
2. All documents and communications that support the May 20, 2020 statement, “the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has been made aware of reports that Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) [sic] has been conducting research at its facilities in China that pose serious bio-safety concerns and, as a result, health and welfare threats to the public, both in China and other countries, including the United States.”

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic is authorized to investigate “the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic, including but not limited to the Federal Government’s funding of gain-of function research” and “executive branch policies, deliberations, decisions, activities, and internal and external communications related to the coronavirus pandemic” under H. Res. 5. To schedule the interviews or to ask any follow-up or related questions please contact Select Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-5074.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Brad R. Wenstrup, D.P.M.

Chairman

Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic

cc: The Honorable Raul Ruiz, Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic

Enclosure (1)

⁶ *Id.* (emphasis added).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Letter from Nancy Lewis, Executive Director, Sponsored Projects Administration, University of Cal., Irvine, to Wuhan Inst. Of Virology (May 26, 2020).