

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1604

October 25, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

I am writing to seek clarification and further explanation regarding your comments before the House Ways and Means Committee regarding the National Institute of Health's (NIH) pursuit of gain of function research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

On June 9, 2021, you testified before the House Ways and Means Committee in the following exchange:

*Mr. Estes: "Can you confirm how much NIH spending went to the Wuhan Institute of Virology whether directly or through other companies?"*

*Secretary Becerra: "I will repeat what Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins have said repeatedly, and that the NIH never approved funding for gain of function research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. We are doing everything we can to make sure that those who receive funding from the NIH are accountable for their funds."*

In a letter sent to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on October 20, 2021, Deputy Director Tabak provided details in direct contradiction to your aforementioned statement. Tabak detailed in length that EcoHealth Alliance conducted gain of function research on bat coronaviruses at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in the 2018-2019 grant period, in direct violation of their agreement with NIH and the United States Government. Even more concerning, EcoHealth Alliance failed to submit a progress report to the NIH until August 2021 admitting that they conducted tests on a virus capable of binding to the human ACE2 receptor. Further, EcoHealth Alliance produced this progress report only secondary to NIH enforcement efforts.

The new information that has just been brought to the attention of Congress is deeply concerning. I request answers no later than November 5, 2021 to the following questions:

1. *Were you duly informed of the NIH's enforcement efforts to bring EcoHealth into compliance prior to your testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee?*

2. *What repercussions do you intend to seek to hold EcoHealth and the NIH accountable for the failure to comply with/enforce the terms of the federal grants issued?*
3. *What actions will you take to prevent such critical failures in future grant enforcement?*
4. *Do you intend to amend your official statement on this matter?*

By your Department's own admission, NIH used and allowed American taxpayer dollars to fund gain of function research on bat coronaviruses inside a hostile foreign power, in a lab with strong connections to the People's Liberation Army and Chinese Communist Party, with no safety or containment protocols in place. I request that you provide answers to my questions and transparency to the American people.

Sincerely,



Ron Estes  
Kansas 4<sup>th</sup> District