



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

December 20, 2021

The Honorable Ron Estes
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Estes:

Thank you for your letter regarding my testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee on June 9, 2021. I have been in close communication with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on the grant to EcoHealth Alliance and its subaward to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and I welcome the opportunity to clarify further my statements.

It is important to appreciate that “gain of function” is a broadly used term in research, most commonly used to describe a scientific experiment in which new attributes are given to an organism used in a study. Only a small fraction of “gain of function” research studies raises significant biosafety and biosecurity risks. For the highest risk subset of research involving enhanced potential pandemic pathogens, NIH has implemented the HHS Framework for Guiding Funding Decisions about Proposed Research Involving Enhanced Potential Pandemic Pathogens ([HHS P3CO Framework](#)) to preserve the benefits of life sciences research while minimizing biosafety and biosecurity risks. Prior to award, the application submitted by EcoHealth Alliance with the subaward to the Wuhan Institute of Virology was subjected to rigorous peer review and did not propose research to enhance any coronavirus to be more transmissible or virulent. NIH also reviewed the research progress reports during the funding period and determined that the reported research did not fit the definition of research involving enhanced potential pandemic pathogens, and as such, it was not subject to departmental review under the HHS P3CO Framework.

NIH has been and continues to engage in compliance activities regarding the EcoHealth Alliance grant. NIH leadership has kept me well-informed about their ongoing work and we will continue to work with NIH leadership to take appropriate next steps.

If you have further thoughts or questions, please have your staff contact the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation at (202) 690-7627.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Xavier Becerra".

Xavier Becerra