

22 October 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On June 3, we wrote to request that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions hold a hearing or series of hearings on the public health and security risks posed by gain-of-function research. We write today to renew that request in light of the recent admission by the National Institute of Health that it had indeed funded gain-of-function research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, despite Administration testimony to our committee to the contrary.

Gain-of-function research aims to predict future naturally-occurring pandemics by enhancing the severity or transmissibility of viruses that may infect humans. In an October 6 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, Dr. Kevin Esvelt of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology bluntly stated, “[t]o discover many dangerous viruses, or learn to enhance weaker ones, is to share the blueprints for an arsenal of plagues.” He went on to say that “such research looks like a gamble that civilization can’t afford to risk.” We could not agree more.

The dangers posed by this kind of research are so acute that under President Obama, the National Institutes of Health suspended funding for all gain-of-function projects for three years. The Senate recognized these risks in May when it passed Paul amendment #2003 to S. 1260, the United States Innovation and Competition Act, by a voice vote. Your assistance was crucial in crafting that amendment, which sought to restrict the use of U.S. federal funds for gain-of-function research.

We renew our request that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions promptly schedule a hearing or series of hearings on gain-of-function research. We look forward to your timely response to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rand Paul". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rand" and last name "Paul" clearly distinguishable.

Rand Paul, M.D.  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. W. Marshall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first initials "R. W." and last name "Marshall" clearly distinguishable.

Roger Marshall, M.D.  
United States Senator