

22 October 2021

The Honorable Gary Peters, Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman:

On June 3, I wrote to request that the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hold a hearing or series of hearings on the public health and security risks posed by gain-of-function research. I 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 Congress 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.” I 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 my 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.

I renew my request that the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee promptly schedule a hearing or series of hearings on gain-of-function research. I look forward to your timely response to this request.

Sincerely,



Rand Paul, M.D.
United States Senator