



May 12, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

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*on leave of absence

Dear Secretary Azar,

On behalf of Research!America, I am writing to request that you clarify the decision to end National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant funding for the EcoHealth Alliance project entitled "Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence." We believe the American people, whose tax dollars enable federal grants for life-saving research and other national priorities, deserve more clarity on the basis of this decision than has thus far been provided.

The abrupt termination of this grant has generated concern, not only because of the relevance of this research to COVID-19 and future pandemics, but because the lack of transparency surrounding the termination creates uncertainty about the integrity of federal grant-making.

We certainly appreciate there may be facets of this decision that cannot be made public, but given the high degree of integrity expected of the NIH extramural grant program, we urge the Administration to bring as much information to light as possible surrounding this decision.

We respectfully request that you provide the American public with insight into the basis of the decision to end funding for the EcoHealth grant and how this decision conforms to the circumstances in which grant terminations are permitted under the United States Code of Federal Regulations.

We are grateful for your leadership during this profoundly challenging period in our nation's history, and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Michael N. Castle
Chair, Member of Congress 1993-2011

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