

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 27, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The threat to international health and security posed by the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) repressive and opaque governance of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has become glaringly apparent over the past eighteen months, particularly given the PRC's efforts to conceal the severity and scope of the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic. The PRC's refusal to cooperate with the World Health Organization (WHO) investigation into COVID-19 origins, the gag order it imposed on Chinese scientists and medical personnel, and its ongoing obfuscation and disinformation campaign regarding the pandemic have caused severe hardship worldwide.

We were therefore glad to see your May 26, 2021, statement directing the intelligence community to "redouble their efforts to collect and analyze information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion" with regard to the pandemic's origin. As the United States emerges from the pandemic, we believe that, in addition to addressing gaps in international pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, including within our own government, three crucial steps are necessary to prevent a similar calamity in the future.

First, we agree that the intelligence community must lead a thorough investigation into the origins of COVID-19. Identifying where the virus originated and how it first spread will be critical to preventing future pandemics. If the 90-day effort you have announced does not yield conclusions in which the United States has a high degree of confidence, we urge you to direct the intelligence community to continue prioritizing this inquiry until such conclusions are possible.

A full and impartial investigation that carefully considers all credible theories, backed by all available evidence, is critical. This includes theories suggested in an open letter by 18 distinguished experts to *Science Magazine* on May 14, 2021, which argued that "theories of accidental release from a lab and zoonotic spillover both remain viable."

We believe the intelligence community should examine relevant research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) and associated facilities, such as the Wuhan Center for Disease Prevention and Control and the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products. This investigation must evaluate evidence regarding WIV researchers who fell ill in the fall of 2019. It should identify other details of any researchers at the WIV who were working on coronavirus projects, and attempts by the PRC government to silence or disappear them; details of any WIV gain-of-function research specific to

coronaviruses or other potential human pathogens; laboratory safety standards and practices for such research; and details of any research in synthetic biology and biotechnology connected to the Military-Civil Fusion strategy, and other military work or funding at the WIV.

Additionally, this investigation must examine any evidence pointing to the possible transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from animals to humans, including specific zoonotic transmission chains, and the most probable timing, location, and contributing factors of any zoonotic spillover events.

We also believe that the investigation should address PRC efforts to prevent international inquiries into the origins of SARS-CoV-2, and other actions PRC authorities have taken to obscure the nature of the virus and its transmission. The U.S. government should examine the international agreements to which the PRC is a party that require disclosure and cooperation in the event of a viral outbreak like SARS-CoV-2, assess whether the PRC violated any of these agreements, and analyze its motivations for doing so.

The investigation should also include details on the collection and analytic guidance the Intelligence Community used from the start of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic to the present to support policy and programmatic requirements.

Second, the U.S. government should lead efforts by the international community and the WHO to seek a transparent forensic investigation in the PRC. The PRC has an obligation to the international community to allow a full, unfettered, impartial, and scientific investigation into COVID-19 origins. In light of the PRC's continued stonewalling of WHO efforts, the U.S. government should work with our allies and partners to use all available resources and tools to pressure Beijing to permit a serious investigation.

Third, the United States must complete a thorough review of existing and prior U.S. government support or funding for research collaboration with the PRC related to gain-of-function, synthetic biology, biotechnology, or other research areas that pose dual-use concerns. U.S. taxpayer funding should not support any collaboration with PRC entities that pose health, economic or security risks for the United States. The PRC has demonstrated lax biosecurity standards, violated the International Health Regulations (2005), attempted to steal intellectual property related to COVID-19 vaccines, and may be in violation of the Biological Weapons Convention. The United States should not be partnering with or funding any country that exhibits these risk factors.

As part of a formal review, we therefore urge you to analyze the following: any direct or indirect U.S. taxpayer funding or engagement with entities in China, including the WIV, regarding gain-of-function research or other forms of research related to viruses, pathogens, and toxins; whether any such research for civilian purposes was diverted for military research; any U.S. taxpayer funding that was used to support gain-of-function research in China during the U.S. moratorium on such research from 2014-2017; and steps taken, if any, to apply additional scrutiny to direct or indirect U.S. government funding, including sub-grants, to support gain-of-function studies in China, including at WIV, after the U.S. government lifted the moratorium on gain-of-function research in 2017.

President Joseph R. Biden
July 27, 2021
Page 3

We expect that Congress will remain fully informed of and consulted on your efforts to reach definitive conclusions regarding the origins of this pandemic, as well as any concrete policy recommendations. *The U.S. Innovation and Competition Act* (S. 1260), which recently passed the U.S. Senate, requires a report to Congress on many of the matters described in this letter. We stand ready to work with your administration in a bipartisan manner to seek answers to these important questions.

Thank you for your attention to and cooperation on these important issues.

Sincerely,



JAMES E. RISCH
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



ROBERT MENENDEZ
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



MARCO RUBIO
Vice Chairman
Senate Intelligence Committee



MARK R. WARNER
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