

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

December 22, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write with concern that a U.S. State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary partnered with an executive from the non-profit organization EcoHealth Alliance (EcoHealth) to discuss “important new science” that “strongly supports zoonotic origins for COVID-19.”¹ The U.S. intelligence community and the World Health Organization officially reported SARS-CoV-2 could have been introduced into the human population by either a laboratory incident or natural spillover and both hypotheses must be further investigated.²

The U.S. Department of State (State Department) endorsement of new science favoring a natural origin of SARS-CoV-2 is troubling, particularly since the State Department has not retracted its Fact Sheet: Activity at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), that describes researcher illnesses resembling COVID-19 in autumn 2019, dangerous bat coronavirus pathogen research at the WIV starting in at least 2016, and secret military activity at the WIV which all seemingly support a laboratory-involved origin.³ Also of concern is that we are unaware of Congressional briefings by the State Department about this new science that apparently strongly supports the COVID-19 zoonotic origins hypothesis.

Concerns with EcoHealth Alliance

EcoHealth is a non-profit organization that has blocked Congressional oversight attempts and failed to produce its bat coronavirus research evidence conducted at the WIV to National Institutes of Health (NIH), the research sponsor. EcoHealth was in optimal position to assist with research into the COVID-19 origins due to its pre-pandemic work in Wuhan, China, but instead of contributing to the efforts, it obstructed the U.S. Government’s investigation through its refusal to provide documents, statements, research materials and unpublished bat coronavirus specimen data.

¹ Global Health Council, *Preventing Pandemics at the Source*, GHSL22 Meeting the Moment (Dec. 7, 2022) available at <https://globalhealth.org/conferences/2022-symposium/>.

² The Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Declassified Assessment on COVID-19 Origins*, Intelligence Community Assessment (Oct. 29, 2021) available at <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/reports-publications/reports-publications-2021/item/2263-declassified-assessment-on-covid-19-origins>; and

WHO Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO), *Preliminary Report*, World Health Organization (June 9, 2022) available at https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/scientific-advisory-group-on-the-origins-of-novel-pathogens/sago-report-09062022.pdf?sfvrsn=42b55bbc_1&download=true.

³ U.S. Department of State, *Fact Sheet: Activity at the Wuhan Institute of Virology*, Office of the Spokesperson, (Jan. 15, 2021) available at <https://2017-2021.state.gov/fact-sheet-activity-at-the-wuhan-institute-of-virology/index.html>.

Congressional concerns with EcoHealth's conduct are well documented and include a House bipartisan amendment approval in June 2022 that banned U.S. State Department funding of any EcoHealth work in China and through passing a September 2021 amendment to defund EcoHealth Alliance.⁴ Also, Congress passed a law in December 2021 prohibiting U.S. Department of Defense funding for any work performed by EcoHealth Alliance in China on research supported by the Chinese government.⁵

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, EcoHealth led dangerous bat coronavirus pathogen collection and research for several years in China at the WIV, through millions of dollars in U.S. grants and cooperative agreements awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).⁶ EcoHealth awarded nearly \$600,000 in NIH funds to the WIV during the five years before the pandemic and at least \$1.1 million in USAID awards to the WIV, plus additional USAID funding for salaries and travel of Chinese researchers, and other Chinese laboratory supplies and services.⁷ EcoHealth violated federal grant rules and laws by not supplying its research grant records to NIH when they were requested, which resulted in a partial grant termination.⁸

The panel presentation with the Vice President of EcoHealth, Jon Epstein, and the U.S. State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary for Space, Science, and Health and Director, Office of International Health and Biodefense, Jim Levy, was hosted by Preventing Pandemics at the Source, a non-profit coalition that includes EcoHealth Alliance.⁹ The presentation was part of the Global Health Landscape Security Conference, a non-profit organization that promotes the concept that, "national security must not be the primary justification for global health security decisions," and that governments too often "conflate national security with health security."¹⁰

Questions

The State Department must explain its participation in this event when the evidence uncovered so far, including the State Department Fact Sheet, weighs in favor of a laboratory origin of COVID-19. We seek an explanation about the State Department's senior official's participation in this joint panel and importantly, of this new science that has not publicly been sanctioned by any government agency.

We request the following:

1. How did the State Department reach the conclusion over the last 18 months that new science strongly supports a zoonotic origin of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19?
2. What new scientific evidence has been uncovered that debunks the State Department's Fact Sheet published Jan. 15, 2021?
3. Has the State Department briefed the White House on its new findings?

⁴ H.R. 8282 available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/8282/text>; and H.R. 4350 available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4350/text>.

⁵ H.R. 1605 available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1605/text>

⁶ USASpending.gov, *EcoHealth Alliance*, Subawards (Dec 8, 2022) available at <https://www.usaspending.gov/search/?hash=38d396960f3d16902149713519bdda87>.

⁷ USASpending.gov, *EcoHealth Alliance*, Subawards (Dec. 8, 2022) available at https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_R01AI110964_7529; U.S. Representative Guy Reschenthaler, *Reschenthaler Uncovers \$1.1 Million in Taxpayer Funding Sent to the Wuhan Institute of Virology*, Press Release (May 14, 2021) available at <https://reschenthaler.house.gov/media/press-releases/reschenthaler-uncovers-11-million-taxpayer-funding-sent-wuhan-institute>; and Review of PREDICT grant documents by Senator Marshall's investigative staff.

⁸ House Oversight Republicans, *NIH Letter to Congress Regarding EcoHealth Alliance* (Aug. 19, 2022) available at https://republicans-oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NIH-Letter-to-Congress-regarding-EHA_Comer.pdf.

⁹ Jordan Schachtel, *Top Biden officials to appear at conference endorsing COVID-19 zoonotic origin theory as 'science,'* The Dossier (Dec. 7, 2022) available at <https://dossier.substack.com/p/top-biden-officials-to-appear-at>.

¹⁰ Global Health Council, *Global Health Security* (Dec. 8, 2022) available at <https://globalhealth.org/holistic-global-health-security/>.

4. Has the State Department published a single agency report about this new scientific evidence?
5. Which State Department management and ethics officials approved Jim Levy's participation on the panel and on what basis?
6. Jim Levy has served several assignments in China, including in Guangzhou from 2018 to 2021 and Beijing. He has also served assignments at the State Department, which include the Bureaus of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Global Talent Management, and Consular Affairs.¹¹ Did Mr. Levy know Jon Epstein or any other EcoHealth staff before December 8, 2022 and if so, please describe the interactions and relationship(s).

For all classified materials, please arrange to have those reviewed in the Senate's SCIF:

1. Please provide all supporting materials that served as a basis for the State Department Fact Sheet. Supporting records include: U.S. Department of Energy laboratory reports; information about sick Chinese researchers; all information, reports, summaries or other forms of advice provided by every paid or unpaid detailee, person's employed through interagency personnel agreements (IPA), and all other outside consultants and experts.
2. Provide the State Department's single agency report submitted to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence at the conclusion of the Intelligence Community's 90-day review from May 26, 2021 to August 26, 2021.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Please provide a written response to this letter no later than January 5, 2023.

Very respectfully,



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator

¹¹ Business Council for Interpretational Understanding, *Jim Levy Biography*, Life Sciences: Virtual Roundtable with Mr. Jim Levy, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Space, Science, and Health and Director, Office of International Health and Biodefense, United States Department of State (May 4, 2022) available at <https://bcui.zohobackstage.com/LIFESCIENCESVirtualRoundtablewithMrJimLevyactingDeputyAssistantSecretaryforSpaceScienceandHealthandID?lang=en#!?lang=en&speakerId=3876000066234119>.