June 28, 2021

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Collins:

On June 23, 2021, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Chinese researchers "directed" the National Institutes of Health (NIH) "to delete gene sequences of early COVID-19 cases from a key scientific database," called the NIH Sequence Read Archive.[1] The article states that NIH confirmed that it deleted the sequences.[2] The article further reports that the deleted data includes genomic sequences from SARS-CoV-2 and that these sequences were from viral samples collected in Wuhan "in January and February 2020" from patients in the hospital.[3]

This type of data may contain important and relevant information that could help to better determine the virus's origins. The efforts by Chinese researchers to delete the data demands additional explanation. As you are aware, the Chinese government has failed, from the beginning, to be open and transparent with the world with respect to its role in the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more than 600,000 deaths, and Congress has spent trillions of dollars to support the American people, businesses, and the economy during these difficult times. Simply put, the American people deserve to know what their government knows about the origins of this global illness. As part of our continuing oversight with respect to NIH's role during the COVID-19 pandemic, we request additional information about the NIH Sequence Read Archive and the actions taken by Chinese researchers to have NIH delete SARS-CoV-2 related data. Accordingly, please answer the following no later than July 12, 2021:

1. Please describe, in detail, how and under what circumstances data can be provided to the NIH Sequence Read Archive and how and under what circumstances data can be deleted from the same.

   Response:

   (b) (5)

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[1] https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-gene-data-that-could-have-aided-research-on-early-epidemic-removed-from-database-11624472105?mod=searchresults_pos1&page=1
[2] Id.
[3] Id.

2. With respect to deleting data from the NIH Sequence Archive, please name all personnel that have the authority to do so. In your answer, please provide the names and titles of the personnel that were involved in the deletion of SARS-CoV-2 data.

   Response:

3. With respect to the *Wall Street Journal* report, which Chinese researcher(s) requested that the data be deleted from the NIH Sequence Read Archive? When was the request made and when did the deletion occur?

   Response:

4. After deletion, does the NIH Sequence Read Archive maintain any accessible back-up of the deleted data? If so, please provide all records to us.

   Response:

5. Please list all collaborating partners to the NIH Sequence Read Archive.

   Response:

6. In the past five years, how many researchers and other personnel associated with the communist Chinese government have requested that data be deleted from the NIH Sequence Read Archive? Please list by requestor, date, reason, and the information to be deleted. Please also note whether and when that material was in fact deleted.

    Response:

7. More specifically, in the past five years, how many researchers and other personnel associated with the communist Chinese government have requested that data be deleted from the NIH Sequence Read Archive relating to coronaviruses? Please list by requestor, date, reason, and the information to be deleted. Please also note whether and when that material was in fact deleted.

    Response:

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

                        Sincerely,

Marsha Blackburn   Charles E. Grassley
U.S. Senator   U.S. Senator

Roger Marshall
U.S. Senator