

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer M. Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

The Honorable Avril Haines
Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20511

Dear Secretary Granholm and Director Haines,

On February 26, 2023, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic was most likely the result of a lab leak.¹ The DOE's conclusion, noted in an update to a document by the Office of the Director National Intelligence (ODNI), was reportedly made as the result of new intelligence and is a shift from its previously undecided position on the emergence of the virus.² This assessment is consistent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) conclusion in 2021, which was recently followed by FBI Director Christopher Wray's public statement that "[t]he FBI has for quite some time now assessed that the origins of the pandemic are most likely a potential lab incident in Wuhan."³

The DOE's assessment serves as further confirmation of the findings in the House Foreign Affairs Committee August 2021 addendum to its report on the origins of COVID-19, which concluded that a preponderance of the evidence shows the COVID-19 pandemic was most likely caused by a lab leak at a Wuhan area research institute.⁴

¹ Michael R. Gordon and Warren P. Strobel, *Lab Leak Most Likely Origin of Covid-19 Pandemic, Energy Department Now Says*, Wall Street Journal (Feb. 26, 2023); <https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-origin-china-lab-leak-807b7b0a>

² *Id.*

³ Michael R. Gordon and Warren P. Strobel, *FBI Director Says Covid Pandemic Likely Caused by Chinese Lab Leak*, Wall Street Journal (Feb. 28, 2023); <https://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-director-says-covid-pandemic-likely-caused-by-chinese-lab-leak-13a5e69b>

⁴ House Foreign Affairs Committee, Minority Staff Report, *The Origins of Covid-19: An Investigation of the Wuhan Institute of Virology*, (Aug. 2021); <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ORIGINS-OF-COVID-19-REPORT.pdf>


The DOE assessment also relates to past oversight efforts by the Committee on Energy and Commerce related to the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a briefing given by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to Committee staff on LLNL's examination of the origins of SARS-CoV-2. The briefing request was prompted by a report that LLNL considered a lab leak as the proximate cause of the COVID-19 pandemic as both plausible and warranted further investigation.⁵

DOE's findings highlight the need for transparency from government agencies regarding information in their possession relevant to the origins of SARS-CoV-2 as a means of rebuilding trust with the American people. This includes the National Institutes of Health (NIH), whose past leadership worked to suppress discussion of the possibility that the COVID-19 pandemic was the result of a research-related incident. The DOE's updated assessment underscores the need for concrete reforms to the International Health Regulations, scrutiny and appropriate evaluation of the WHO's proposed "Pandemic Accord," new leadership at the World Health Organization (WHO), Taiwan's re-admittance to the WHO as an observer, and a thorough international investigation regarding the origins of COVID-19.

To assist the Committees in understanding DOE and the Intelligence Community's assessments and reporting on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, please provide the updated DOE assessment, including any underlying analyses from DOE national laboratories, and a comprehensive briefing on DOE's findings no later than March 20, 2023. We further request that the ODNI take immediate steps to declassify the DOE's assessment.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee

CC:

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Rep. Frank Pallone, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee

⁵ Letter to Kimberly S. Budil, Ph.D. from Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers *et al*, (May 11, 2021); <https://d1dth6e84htgma.cloudfront.net/legacy/uploads/2021/05/5.11.21-Energy-and-Commerce-Minority-Letter-to-LLNL73.pdf>