

GARY C. PETERS, MICHIGAN, CHAIRMAN

THOMAS R. CARPER, DELAWARE  
MARGARET WOOD HASSAN, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
KYRSTEN SINEMA, ARIZONA  
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA  
JON OSSOFF, GEORGIA  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT  
LAPHONZA R. BUTLER, CALIFORNIA

RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY  
RON JOHNSON, WISCONSIN  
JAMES LANKFORD, OKLAHOMA  
MITT ROMNEY, UTAH  
RICK SCOTT, FLORIDA  
JOSH HAWLEY, MISSOURI  
ROGER MARSHALL, KANSAS

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

DAVID M. WEINBERG, STAFF DIRECTOR  
WILLIAM E. HENDERSON III, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
LAURA W. KILBRIDE, CHIEF CLERK

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Secretary Becerra:

I write to request additional information regarding a 2018 grant proposal led by EcoHealth Alliance known as the DEFUSE project. The grant proposal was submitted to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) under the PREventing Emerging Pathogenic Threats (PREEMPT) program. It has come to my attention that the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)'s Rocky Mountain Laboratory was at one point listed as a partner on the DEFUSE proposal.

On January 30, 2018, DARPA hosted a "PREEMPT Proposers Day" meeting where potential applicants presented proposals to representatives of numerous federal agencies. During this event, Peter Daszak of EcoHealth Alliance pitched the DEFUSE project which sought federal funds to "manipulate known viruses with spike proteins of novel viral strains."

I recently obtained documents revealing that Vincent Munster of NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratory was listed as a partner in the DEFUSE proposal presented at the PREEMPT Proposers Day, alongside Wuhan Institute of Virology, University of North Carolina Baric Lab, Columbia University Lipkin Lab, and Duke-NUS. Additionally, these documents show that HHS was one of several federal agencies that participated in the PREEMPT Proposers Day on January 30, 2018, where the DEFUSE project was presented.

The new information about NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratory's involvement as part of the DEFUSE proposal team and HHS's participation in the PREEMPT Proposers Day appears to contradict previous testimony by Dr. Anthony Fauci's that NIH was not aware of the proposal. The failure of HHS to disclose its awareness of the risky research proposed in the DEFUSE project at any point in the last six years raises serious concerns.

For this reason, I respectfully request you provide my office the following information no later than 5:00PM on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024:

1. All records relating to NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratory's involvement in the DEFUSE proposal including, but not limited to, any subsequent related proposal.
2. All communications relating to NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratory's involvement in the DEFUSE proposal or any subsequent related proposal including, but not limited to, all communications between Vincent Munster and any individual from EcoHealth Alliance, Wuhan Institute of Virology, University of North Carolina, Columbia University, or Duke-NUS.
3. All records relating to the PREEMPT Program including, but not limited to, records related to the January 30, 2018 PREEMPT Proposers Day and any subsequent meetings/events;
4. All communications relating to the PREEMPT program including, but not limited to, communications related to the potential participation of Rocky Mountain Laboratory in any PREEMPT project proposal;
5. The names and titles of the individuals who attended the January 30, 2018, PREEMPT Proposers Day on behalf of HHS;
6. A list of all DARPA Proposers Day events related to infectious disease where HHS or any of its components was represented from 2016 to present; and
7. All records related to any proposed grant, contract, subgrant, subcontract, or interagency agreement between HHS or any of its components and DARPA including, but not limited to any proposals or applications that were ultimately not awarded.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rand Paul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rand Paul, M.D.  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on  
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs