

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
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April 9, 2024

The Honorable Dr. Monica Bertagnolli
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dr. Bertagnolli:

I write to request additional information about the National Institute of Health's (NIH) involvement in 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) 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.

The new information about NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratory's involvement as part of the DEFUSE proposal team and NIH's participation in the PREEMPT Proposers Day appears to contradict previous testimony by Dr. Anthony Fauci that NIH was not aware of the proposal. The failure of NIH 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, 2023:

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 NIH or NIAID;
6. A list of all DARPA Proposers Day events related to infectious disease where NIH was represented from 2016 to present; and
7. All records related to any proposed grant, contract, subgrant, subcontract, or interagency agreement between NIAID 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