

## United States Senate

October 22, 2021

Christi A. Grimm  
Principal Deputy Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
330 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Principal Deputy Inspector General Grimm:

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to ravage the United States, I am deeply concerned about a number of credible allegations against the National Institutes of Health (NIH) regarding its role in the COVID-19 crisis. As the lead oversight agency for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the NIH, you are in a critical position to deliver accountability and answers to the American people. While Communist China's lies, obfuscation and propaganda undoubtedly fueled the global spread of COVID-19 that has now taken more than five million lives, there remains fair uncertainty and doubt over the NIH and the U.S. role in the origin of COVID-19.

It is with this concern that I write to you and urge that you use the full resources of your office to provide detailed responses to the following questions and begin the important work of ensuring the accountability and transparency that is essential to restoring public trust in our national institutions:

- Is the Office of Inspector General (OIG) currently conducting a review on the origins of COVID-19 and any role that HHS, including any of its agencies, may have had? If so, does this investigation include HHS, subsidiary organizations, contractors, grantees, and sub-grantees that may work with or have ties to the government of Communist China? Further, this investigation must include the appointment of a senior agent with full power to investigate these entities, including the power to work directly with other Federal law enforcement agencies to open potential criminal investigations.
- Is the HHS OIG currently investigating whether HHS funding was directly or indirectly, appropriately or inappropriately, used to support gain-of-function

(GOF) research related to SARS-CoV-2?


- HHS established the Review Mechanism for Potential Pandemic Pathogens Care and Oversight (P3CO) Framework to review GOF research. There have been reports that GOF grants may have been granted outside of the P3CO oversight. Has HHS OIG reviewed the P3CO framework, and whether it had sufficient controls in place to balance the needs of research and safety?
- Is HHS OIG reviewing the EcoHealth Alliance grant and its possible GOF research? Was the EcoHealth Alliance grant reviewed by the P3CO review group?
- How much of the HHS OIG's resources are tasked with oversight of NIH and its grants? How does that compare to oversight of other HHS agencies? Do you have sufficient funding and resources to oversee the various components at HHS?
- How would your oversight abilities be enhanced and improved by the addition of staff, including deputy inspectors general, over each of the HHS agencies?
- What oversight projects are the HHS OIG currently conducting regarding Communist China and its role in the COVID-19 pandemic?
- We know that as an enemy of the United States, Communist China has been an untrustworthy partner on the global stage. Communist China's Confucius Institute program was designed to undermine U.S. intellectual property to advantage Chinese researchers supported by the Chinese Communist Party.
  - You previously highlighted NIH's and its grantee's lack of sufficient cybersecurity capabilities to ensure the security of U.S. grant research. What work, if any, has been done to address this critical issue and ensure compliance with existing laws at NIH and American universities has increased?
  - Is HHS OIG reviewing all NIH grants that previously were given to Chinese labs, especially any lab in Wuhan?
- Has HHS OIG reviewed the actions and activities of HHS, NIH, or Centers for Disease Control in the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak? Did HHS have a protocol or plan for potential future pandemics? Was it sufficient? Did they follow their plan? Did agencies fully report information to other agencies?

Christi A. Grimm  
October 22, 2021  
Page Three

The HHS OIG serves an important role as the lead watchdog over HHS' many agencies. It is only through applied oversight that agency deficiencies and inefficiencies can be corrected. With a budget of over \$40 billion dollars, NIH must do all it can to be good stewards of limited taxpayer funds, ensure that American intellectual property is secure, and continue to protect the public's health.

I look forward to your prompt response to these questions and working together to ensure proper oversight, which is critical to maintaining accountability at HHS and across the federal government to American taxpayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott  
United States Senator