

EcoHealth Alliance Statement on NIH's decision to reinstate and instantly suspend funding to understand the emergence of bat-origin coronaviruses in China.

We were initially pleased to learn that the National Institutes of Health ("NIH") had reversed its indefensible decision to terminate our funding for a five year research project on emerging coronaviruses, during this coronavirus pandemic. However, NIH's letter cynically reinstates and instantly suspends EcoHealth Alliance's funding, then attempts to impose impossible and irrelevant conditions that will effectively block us from continuing this critical work.

It is the belief of EcoHealth Alliance that NIH's letter does not represent a good faith effort to understand the nature of our ongoing research, which is indispensable to analyzing the origins of a coronavirus pandemic that has, to date, infected more than 20 million people worldwide. The position taken by NIH inexplicably suspends a grant studying the very family of viruses responsible for COVID-19, and which has provided the best evidence yet on its origins.

Further research into the origins of SARS-CoV-2's spillover and spread is important. Yet NIH's latest determination senselessly undermines this cause. It imposes on us a series of demands that the NIH is fully aware many governments and the World Health Organization alike have been unable to successfully satisfy. These demands include asking us to provide evidence to refute conspiracy theories that are unscientific and damaging; pressuring us to inquire into research unrelated to our collaboration; and probing us on research that was conducted by other organizations, and completed years prior to our NIH-funded work. This letter not only continues the grant's termination de facto; it actively requests that we put the health and safety of our staff at risk in an attempt to satisfy these demands.

EcoHealth Alliance is grateful to those who understand and support our goals. Addressing this continued interference with our work takes time and resources, but we have never let it distract us from the task at hand. As always, our mission is to stop pandemics at their source. Whatever the obstacles, we will continue to do just that.