



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0906

August 16, 2023

Dr. Lawrence A. Tabak
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Dr. Tabak,

Open The Books, a government transparency group, recently released a report revealing that, from 2008 to 2021, National Institutes of Health (NIH) employees received over \$325 million in payments from private companies in 31 different countries, including some affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).¹ These payments raise not only national security concerns but deepen concerns regarding the potential undue influence massive healthcare companies may have over public health agencies engaged in developing and regulating products and responding to public health threats – like COVID-19.

Of particular concern, companies that were intimately involved with – and stood to financially gain from – the federal government’s COVID-19 response, such as Moderna, Pfizer, BioNTech US, and Johnson & Johnson, provided a number of payments to NIH scientists. Naturally, providing payments to NIH scientists, even if the product was unrelated to COVID-19, raises concerns about the role these companies play in NIH decision making.

Worse still, the Open The Books report found that at least 59 payments originated from the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, a CCP controlled subsidiary associated with the Wuhan Institute of Virology, from which multiple federal agencies now believe the COVID-19 virus initially leaked. However, at the beginning of the pandemic, then-NIH Director Francis Collins and then-NIAID Director Anthony Fauci dismissed the so-called “lab leak theory” – Director Collins went as far as calling it “outrageous.”² While the report does not indicate that Dr. Collins or Dr. Fauci received payments from the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, the NIH’s close financial ties to the entity, and its early dismissal of the lab leak theory, cannot be ignored and warrant further examination. It should also be noted that Dr. Fauci, despite being the highest-paid employee in the federal government, hauled in at least 37 third-party payments from companies, while Dr. Collins received at least 21 third-party payments.

COVID-19 aside, the report raises general national security concerns regarding our public health apparatus’ financial ties to our geopolitical adversaries, including the CCP and companies based in Russia. According to the report, at least 34 different Chinese companies made royalty payments to NIH scientists from 2008 to 2021 and NIH scientists received at least 20 royalty payments from a Russian-based “vaccine” company that is widely believed to be a secret bioweapon lab.³

The American people deserve to know that their public health officials follow the science and make decisions based purely on objective information, not personal financial motives. You acknowledged this

¹ Open The Books, 2023, NIH Secret Third-Party Royalty Database.

² <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/fauci-and-collins-dismissed-prominent-scientists-who-endorsed-lab-leak-theory-emails-show/>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/06/17/russias-poorly-guarded-past/603c3de9-22f5-493f-be5b-fc31eb938a9d/>

fact when you testified that royalty payments carry the “appearance” of a conflict of interest during a congressional hearing last year.⁴ As such, we request you respond to the following requests and questions by August 22nd.

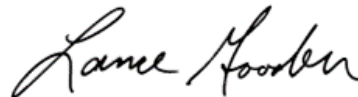
1. Did scientists who received payments from companies that developed COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, or other products play a role in developing NIH recommendations, guidance, public health protocols related to medical countermeasures, including vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics related to COVID-19? If so, please explain and provide all records related to their assessments and recommendations.
2. Did scientists who received payments from companies that developed COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, or other products play a role in advising other public health agencies – like FDA or CDC – on COVID-19 public health protocols related to medical countermeasures, including vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics? If so, please explain and provide all records related to their assessments and recommendations.
3. Did scientists who received payments from the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products play any role in advising NIH leadership on COVID-19 public health protocols related to medical countermeasures, including vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics? If so, please explain and provide all records related to their assessments and recommendations.
4. What steps did NIH take to address potential financial conflicts of interest related to recommendations or positions regarding COVID-19?
5. Describe the nature of all personnel administrative adverse actions NIH has taken against NIH employees related to conflicts of interest created by receiving a third-party payment and review of a product since passage of the Bayh Dole Act?
6. Provide information about each investigation of NIH scientists due to conflict-of-interest concerns and include the NIH Office of Ethics or NIH Office of Management assessment.
7. Please describe each conflict-of-interest concern NIH has referred to the HHS OIG and the results.
8. Please provide a fully transparent accounting of the company, product, date of disbursement, scientist name, and the amount of all third-party payments received by NIH employees.
9. Has the State Department, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Commerce Department or any other national security agency reviewed and cleared requests for NIH current or former staff to accept royalty payments directly from businesses in China or Russia or other countries of concern where the companies are an extension of the communist governments?
10. What steps has NIH taken to ensure that NIH employees do not become compromised by our geopolitical adversaries through third-party payments?
11. How can NIH mitigate, limit or eliminate even the perception of pay-for-play and conflicts of interest through third-party payments to NIH employees?
12. Will NIH commit to annually releasing a report on third-party payments to NIH employees?

We look forward to your prompt answers to the above questions. In Congress, we will continue our work to ensure that any future public health legislation includes COVID accountability and properly disentangles big healthcare from the public health bureaucracy responsible for regulating it.

Sincerely,



Chip Roy
Member of Congress



Lance Gooden
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuy-L71auf0>



Anna Paulina Luna
Member of Congress



Harriet M. Hageman
Member of Congress



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



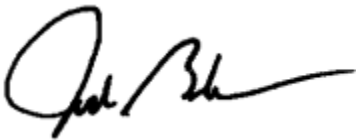
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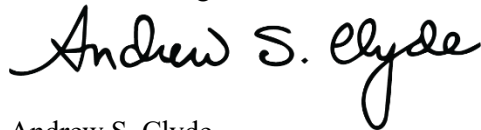
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