

FRANK PALLONE, JR., NEW JERSEY
CHAIRMAN

CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS, WASHINGTON
RANKING MEMBER

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927

Minority (202) 225-3641

May 21, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

We write to request classified briefings that will assist us in our inquiry into the origins of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. As Republican leaders of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Congressional Committee with jurisdiction over public health, we strongly support a comprehensive investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the possibility of an accidental laboratory leak. Accordingly, we request separate classified briefings from the National Bioforensic Analysis Center (NBFAC) and the National Biological Threat Characterization Center (NBTCC) on any work related to the origins of SARS-CoV-2.

This is critical to our inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 because the NBFAC conducts technical analyses in support of federal law enforcement investigations in the use or suspected use of biological weapons. In addition, we understand that the NBFAC has conducted research on characterizing and analyzing evidence for attribution. Further, it is our understanding that the NBFAC has been studying genetic sequencing methods, and how such methods can be used to analyze evidence. Thus, we would like the briefing to address the following:

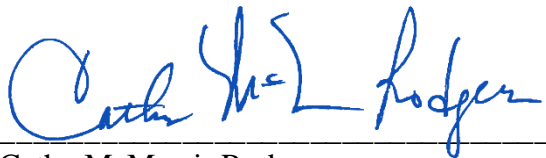
1. Did NBFAC conduct any study or experiments to test the origins of COVID-19?
2. Did NBFAC conduct any briefings on the origins of COVID19?
3. Did NBFAC participate in any meeting within NBFAC or an interagency meeting to discuss the origins of COVID-19, or how such a study can be done? If yes, please provide any documents that NBFAC has on this issue for viewing at the briefing.
4. What type of information would be needed to address the natural origins hypothesis and the lab origins hypothesis?

In addition, the NBTCC conducts studies and laboratory experiments to (1) fill in information gaps to understand better current and future biological threats; (2) assess vulnerabilities and conduct risk assessments; and (3) determine potential impacts to guide the development of countermeasures such as detectors, drugs, vaccines, and decontamination technologies. Thus, we would like the briefing to address the following:

1. Did NBTCC conduct any study or experiments to test the origins of COVID-19?
2. Did NBTCC conduct any briefings on the origins of COVID19?
3. Did NBTCC participate in any meeting within NBTCC or an interagency meeting to discuss the origins of COVID-19, or how such a study can be done? If yes, please provide any documents that NBTCC has on this issue for viewing at the briefing.
4. What type of information would be needed to address the natural origins hypothesis and the lab origins hypothesis?

We believe each of these centers has conducted work that would be useful to advancing an investigation into the origins of COVID-19. Please make arrangements to schedule these briefings for Committee staff by June 4, 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Alan Slobodin or Diane Cutler of the Minority Committee staff. Thank you for your attention to this request.

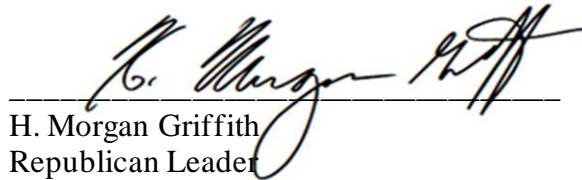
Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Leader
Committee on Energy and Commerce



Brett Guthrie
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Health



H. Morgan Griffith
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

CC: The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chairman
The Honorable Anna Eshoo, Chair, Subcommittee on Health
The Honorable Diana DeGette, Chair, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations