# U.S. Suspends Funding for EcoHealth Alliance Amid COVID-19 Origins Debate



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The Biden administration has suspended funding for EcoHealth Alliance, a nonprofit virus research organization, following intense scrutiny over its collaboration with Chinese scientists. The decision was communicated in a letter from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on May 15, 2024.

The move came after a heated congressional hearing where EcoHealth’s president, Peter Daszak, faced allegations of misrepresenting the group's work with researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. This institute is central to theories suggesting the COVID-19 pandemic originated from a lab leak. Some Republican lawmakers even called for a criminal investigation into Daszak.

EcoHealth has depended heavily on federal funding, receiving about $625,000 annually on average before an initial grant was terminated in April 2020 under the Trump administration. Although the grant was partially reinstated later, three active grants totaling $2.6 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have now been suspended. HHS officials cited EcoHealth's failure to report findings promptly and issues related to monitoring work at the Wuhan lab among the reasons for the decision.

In response, EcoHealth Alliance plans to contest the funding suspension, asserting that the allegations are unfounded and that their continued work is in the public interest. Despite the controversy, definitive evidence linking EcoHealth's research to the pandemic's onset remains absent, with many scientists suggesting a market origin involving wild animals in Wuhan as more plausible.

Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers have supported the funding suspension, viewing it as a necessary measure for national security and public safety.

The HHS also emphasized that the decision to suspend funding was based on EcoHealth's non-compliance with federal regulations, nearly three years after the initial reporting of related issues.