# US Department Suspends Funding to EcoHealth Alliance Over Covid-19 Research Concerns



The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has suspended funding to EcoHealth Alliance, a virus research organization, citing concerns over its work related to the origins of Covid-19. This decision, announced on Wednesday, also indicates that the organization may be barred from receiving federal funds for several years.

EcoHealth Alliance, led by Dr. Peter Daszak, had previously received a US government grant to study bat coronaviruses at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China. Although the US-funded research at the Wuhan lab has not been directly linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, funding to EcoHealth was first suspended in 2020. The grant was later reinstated, but funding to the Wuhan lab remains blocked.

In a letter to EcoHealth Alliance, HHS outlined 30 instances, some dating back to 2013, to justify the suspension. It claimed EcoHealth failed to adequately monitor virus growth, notify the National Institutes of Health (NIH) about exceeding permissible thresholds, and provide requested information promptly. Henrietta Brisbon, an official responsible for suspensions and debarments at HHS, wrote that immediate action was needed to protect public interest.

EcoHealth Alliance expressed disappointment in a statement and vowed to contest the decision by providing evidence to refute the allegations. An HHS Office of the Inspector General report last year found delayed reporting and insufficient NIH follow-up regarding the EcoHealth grant. EcoHealth countered this by stating it faced technical issues accessing the NIH reporting system, a claim a forensic report recently rejected.

Earlier this month, Dr. Daszak was questioned by House lawmakers about EcoHealth’s research and safety records. Brad Wenstrup, a Republican from Ohio who chairs the House Oversight Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, emphasized that their investigation into EcoHealth and Covid-19's origins is ongoing. The origins of the virus remain a topic of debate, with scientific studies suggesting natural emergence in a Wuhan market, while the US intelligence community considers a laboratory origin plausible.