

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051

MINORITY (202) 225-5074

<http://oversight.house.gov>

February 20, 2020

The Honorable Francis S. Collins
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Director Collins:

We write to request documents and information about reports that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is targeting ethnically Chinese scientists as part of a purported plan to protect U.S. biomedical research from foreign interference.

According to the *New York Times*, NIH sent 18,000 letters asking administrators who oversee government grants to increase scrutiny of scientists with foreign ties, especially those with connections to China. NIH also reportedly started to investigate 180 individual cases related to the “potential theft of intellectual property” and referred 24 cases involving possible criminal activity to the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Inspector (DHS OIG).¹

These efforts are reportedly part of a counter-intelligence initiative of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).² While there are undoubtedly authentic and legitimate cases of espionage that should be investigated, these reports have created serious concern that innocent people are being swept up in this initiative.³

The current moves have been characterized as “racial profiling” and a “new Red Scare.” Frank Wu, the former president of the Committee of 100, a non-partisan organization of prominent Chinese Americans, noted that he is “getting calls and emails constantly now from ethnic Chinese—even those who are U.S. citizens—who feel threatened.”⁴

¹ *Vast Dagnet Targets Theft of Biomedical Secrets for China*, New York Times (Nov. 4, 2019) (online at www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/health/china-nih-scientists.html).

² *The U.S. Is Purging Chinese Cancer Researchers from Top Institutions*, Bloomberg (June 13, 2019) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-06-13/the-u-s-is-purging-chinese-americans-from-top-cancer-research).

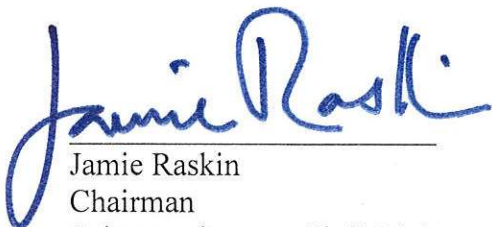
³ *Vast Dagnet Targets Theft of Biomedical Secrets for China*, New York Times (Nov. 4, 2019) (online at www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/health/china-nih-scientists.html).

⁴ *Chinese American Scientists Uneasy Amid Crackdown on Foreign Influence*, Nature (June 3, 2019)

To assist examination of these events by the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, I request that you produce the following information, covering the time period of June 1, 2016, to the present, by March 5, 2020:

1. A copy of the letter NIH sent to 18,000 administrators and a list of all addressees since August 2018;
2. A description of the 180 cases currently being investigated by the NIH, including the race/ethnicity and national origin of all individuals being investigated, the institutions where they are based, whether the investigations were prompted by NIH or the FBI, the status of the cases, and the outcome of any completed investigations;
3. A description of the 24 cases NIH referred to DHS OIG, including the race/ethnicity and national origin of all individuals being investigated, the institutions where they are based, whether the investigations were prompted by NIH or the FBI, the status of the cases, and the outcome of any completed investigations;
4. Any disclosure guidelines that NIH provides to grantees concerning requirements to disclose the names and affiliations of foreign collaborators, foreign income and awards, and other information; and
5. All communications with the FBI regarding the investigations of individuals of Chinese ethnicity.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the Committee’s request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.



Jamie Raskin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Sincerely,



Judy Chu
Chair
Congressional Asian Pacific American
Caucus

(online at www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01605-9). See also *The New Red Scare on American Campuses*, *The Economist* (Jan. 2, 2020) (online at www.economist.com/briefing/2020/01/02/the-new-red-scare-on-american-campuses); *As China Anxiety Rises in U.S., Fears of New Red Scare Emerge*, *Bloomberg* (Dec. 31, 2019) (online at www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-12-31/as-china-anxiety-rises-in-u-s-fears-of-new-red-scare-emerge).

The Honorable Francis S. Collins
Page 3

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Chip Roy, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties