



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2020

The Honorable Francis Collins, M.D.
Director, U.S. National Institutes of Health
600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Collins,

Thank you for your important work to advance public health.

As you are aware, following a recent rise in painful primate testing at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Congress included important language in the fiscal year 2020 federal spending package directing the agency to report to Congress by December 2020 on its efforts to reduce intramural primate research in favor of alternatives.¹

New reports about disturbing taxpayer-funded experiments on monkeys at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in Bethesda, Maryland demonstrate why more Congressional oversight of NIH primate research is urgently needed.²

According to videos and other NIH documents released last month to the watchdog group White Coat Waste Project following a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, NIMH researchers have spent at least \$16 million since 2007 to damage monkeys' brains with acid, suction or burns, chain them up in tiny cages, and video record them being frightened with mechanical snakes and, as the researchers state, "hairy rubber spiders."^{3,4} The NIH database shows that the same grant has also recently funded research where monkeys were given brain damage and tested on whether they could tell the difference between monkeys' faces and pieces of fruit.⁵ It appears the NIH researcher who leads this project has been continuously funded to conduct similar primate testing since at least 1995.⁶

A clinical psychologist interviewed about these studies stated that the tests, "will not translate to improved outcomes for the real human patients that my colleagues and I treat for anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders."²

We have serious concerns about whether this questionable research deserves continued support from Congress and taxpayers. Please provide our offices with the following information:

¹ <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20191216/BILLS-116HR1865SA-JES-DIVISION-A.pdf>

² <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/feb/24/nih-research-involved-frightening-monkeys-cages/>

³ https://projectreporter.nih.gov/project_info_history.cfm?aid=10011370&icde=48141206

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6529874/?report=classic>

⁵ https://projectreporter.nih.gov/project_info_results.cfm?aid=10011370&icde=48141206

⁶ https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter_SearchResults.cfm?icde=49002720

- **Project list:** Provide a list of all active intramural grants that are supporting the research program described above, including titles, project numbers, start/end dates.
- **Actively-funded grants:** For each project, please identify how many years it has been funded, how much taxpayer money it received in FY19, and the total cost over the lifetime of the project to date.
- **Past taxpayer funding:** Please provide a list of all inactive intramural grants that have supported the research program above, including titles, lifetime cost, project numbers, and start/end dates.
- **Return on investment:** For each active project, list specific examples of when and where the research has had successful direct clinical applications in humans.
- **Primate use:** How many primates were used in this research from FY15-FY19? Please breakdown by year, species and USDA pain category.
- **Primate retirement:** How many primates have been retired to sanctuaries from this project? Does the NIH—like the FDA and VA—allow primate retirement after research?

Our staffs have sought answers to these questions, but many details are not available on NIH RePORTER and other government databases.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress