



June 23, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide—regarding the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) decision to continue funding the P51 core grant for the deeply troubled Washington National Primate Research Center (WaNPRC) at the University of Washington (UW). We have been contacting you for the past 18 months regarding the catastrophic problems at WaNPRC—including the center's failure to maintain biosecurity; violations of state health and veterinary regulations; environmental racism; toxic waste exposures; apparent financial mismanagement; an appalling and unexplained death rate among monkeys; and multiple violations of animal protection laws—but your office has chosen to refer these concerns to the very agency—NIH—that is enabling WaNPRC's unethical and sometime illegal actions.

To be clear, WaNPRC's failures don't only threaten the health and well-being of the hundreds of sentient nonhuman primates imprisoned at the center's facilities in Washington and Arizona, but also pose grave and unpredictable risks to public health and safety, compromise the scientific integrity of experiments conducted on macaques from these facilities, and undermine public confidence in federal agencies. NIH's continued squandering of taxpayer dollars—to the tune of nearly \$13 million in 2022, just for infrastructure costs; and an additional tens of millions of dollars in 2022 for experiments on monkeys—is a stunning insult to science, public health, public safety, effective stewardship of public funds, and animal welfare.

Our expectation when we contacted your office with records documenting systemic and egregious problems at WaNPRC, was that your agency would proceed with a comprehensive investigation. But it appears that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has made no serious effort to pursue an independent and thorough investigation, choosing instead to ignore the overwhelming problems that have been documented by state and federal agencies.

As we wrote in one of our earlier communications, WaNPRC routinely ships animals with clinical evidence of infectious diseases. Although state laws require the reporting of monkeys harboring certain pathogens, records obtained by PETA documented that the institution failed to comply with these requirements—jeopardizing public safety and compromising the federally-funded research in which these sick animals were used.

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

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- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

We also informed you of the high death rate and toxic waste exposure at WaNPRC's breeding facility in Arizona, which is also funded by NIH; the possible danger to the populations living near the breeding facility who may be exposed to pathogens such as *Trypanosoma cruzi*, *Vibrio cholerae*, *Campylobacter*, *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, *Yersinia*, *Cryptosporidium*, and flaviviruses, which are circulating in the blood, feces, and urine of the macaques brought into their state; the apparent financial mismanagement at WaNPRC; and the multiple, ongoing animal welfare violations.

As NIH is providing hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars each year to UW—including for painful and deadly infectious disease experiments on monkeys funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases—you should also know that in late December 2021, the King County Superior Court held the primate center liable in civil litigation under the Washington Public Records Act based on its policy of intentionally destroying photographs and video from experiments, as admitted under oath by the former interim director and the current associate director for research. This policy appears to violate both NIH Grants Policy Statement § 8.4.2, requiring experimental data and records be maintained for at least three years, and Washington law prohibiting destruction of public records.

The evidence we have amassed and offered to provide reveals that this NIH-funded facility has apparently violated state and federal laws, violated the integrity of science, and threatened public health with its movement of diseased animals. Why should the American public trust HHS and NIH when, even after being presented with the overwhelming chronic and systemic problems at WaNPRC, the agencies continue to fund that institution? We urge you to investigate how and why NIH approved the new P51 core grant.

May I hear from you? Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Guillermo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Guillermo  
Senior Vice President  
Laboratory Investigations Department