

GERALD E. CONNOLLY
11TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA
2238 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-1492

FAIRFAX OFFICE:
4115 ANNANDALE ROAD
SUITE 103
ANNANDALE, VA 22003
(703) 256-3071

PRINCE WILLIAM OFFICE:
2241-D TACKETT'S MILL DRIVE
WOODBIDGE, VA 22192
(571) 408-4407

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4611

COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEES:
RANKING MEMBER, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

May 24, 2017

The Honorable Thomas E. Price
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Anne Schuchat, M.D. (RADM, USPHS)
Acting Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Secretary Price, Director Collins, and Acting Director Schuchat:

I write to ask you for information regarding your organizations' financial conflict of interest policies for employees and federally funded research. Recent cases have raised serious concerns that commercial organizations have compromised the objectivity of federally funded research. This is unacceptable and threatens the integrity of research sponsored by your institutions.

It is concerning that some scientists serve as consultants, researchers, board members, and advisors for outside industries as well as industry-funded and -funded organizations while working for your institutions on research and policy development that would directly impact those industries. This is potentially a violation of the public trust and should be addressed immediately. Americans must be able to make informed decisions about their health, and they will not be able to do so if your organizations do not have in place and enforce robust conflict of interest policies.

Concerns about conflict of interest policies at your organizations are not new. In April 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report, "NIH Conflict of Interest: Recusal Policies for Senior Employees Need Clarification." The GAO recommendation included in that report remains unimplemented ten years later. A senior CDC official resigned in June 2016 after

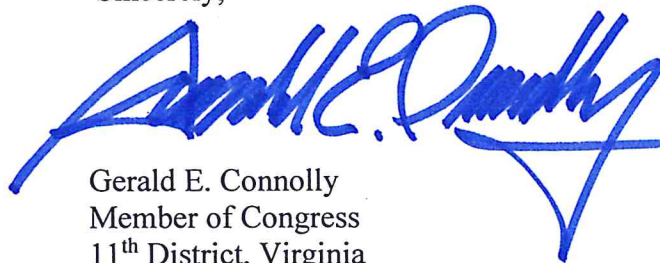
her collaboration with private industry was revealed, and in August of last year a group of scientists at CDC wrote to the Chief of Staff for the Director to voice concerns about scientific integrity and ethics at the agency. Substantial conflict of interest concerns were front and center during the confirmation process for Secretary Price as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

All Americans have a right to know that their trust has not been abused and that government-sanctioned policy, research, and researchers are free of conflicts. To this end, please provide my office with responses to the following items:

1. Please explain your current financial conflict of interest policies; how they are monitored and enforced; and what the waiver process entails.
2. What types and amounts of industry funding (research, advisory, travel, etc.) are government employees and members of advisory committees permitted to accept and under what circumstances?
3. Have you conducted an evaluation of your conflict of interest policies to determine whether they adequately prevent and mitigate conflicts of interest in federally-funded research? If so, please provide the details of any evaluation, including the time period reviewed, findings, and actions taken in response. If you have not conducted any evaluations, do you plan to?
4. Is your organization working on strengthening these policies, and if so, how?
5. Will you work to catalogue and disclose federally sponsored studies which have already been conducted and which received industry funding?
6. What steps will you take to ensure that your department and agencies regularly review your conflict of interest policies to ensure that they are up-to-date? How will the NIH work to address the recommendation from GAO report GAO-07-319?

I respectfully request that you respond to this inquiry by June 23, 2017. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
11th District, Virginia