

ASBMB STATEMENT ON REVOCATION OF ECOHEALTH ALLIANCE GRANT ON BAT-HUMAN VIRUS TRANSMISSION

The following is a statement from Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology:

“We are deeply troubled by the revocation of a peer-reviewed research grant for seemingly political reasons. If news reports are true and the National Institutes of Health cut off funding that had been approved for the EcoHealth Alliance to study bat-borne illnesses, including coronaviruses, because of pressure from the White House, that sets a dangerous precedent and threatens the independence of the American scientific enterprise.

Funding decisions at the NIH are not made by politicians or bureaucrats, but by independent peer-review panels made up of scientists. Those panels select projects for funding based on their scientific merit. Allowing politics to influence or override their decisions weaponizes research funding and causes scientists to lose faith in these long-standing institutions.

If the grant in question was revoked for scientific reasons or misconduct, that information should be shared with the public. Otherwise, as America grapples with now 1 million cases of COVID-19, stopping research on coronaviruses because of politics seems improper.”