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February 3, 2020

Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.
Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
5601 Fishers Lane, MSC 9806
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Fauci,

I write to inquire about efforts to develop a vaccine for the novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) originating out of Wuhan. Even with established travel restrictions in several affected cities, the 2019-nCoV has killed more than 360 people and infected more than 17,000 individuals since Chinese authorities discovered the virus just a few weeks ago. The virus is spreading rapidly, causing Chinese officials to close schools, shut down some public transportation routes, and restrict car and taxi movements through some of the most severely affected areas.

As you know well, 2019-nCoV is a new coronavirus, related to Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), which also cause severe acute respiratory infection. These viruses have no specific cure or vaccine to date. MERS and SARS sickened fewer than 10,000 individuals, killing roughly 1,200; 2019-nCoV appears to be much more widespread, though potentially less fatal. With three novel coronavirus outbreaks in roughly 18 years, and considering the significant impact of this novel coronavirus, finding a vaccine that treats all coronaviruses would be a significant development for global public health.

In discussing this outbreak, you are reported to have said that a universal coronavirus vaccine is possible, and worth considering.¹ I agree that, if feasible, NIAID should be pursuing ambitious, disruptive goals like a universal coronavirus vaccine, while also working toward advancements that will also allow us to respond to the current outbreak.

To that end, please provide me with an update within 14 business days on your goals for bringing about the design and production of a universal coronavirus vaccine and the efforts NIAID is undertaking to achieve these goals. In your response, please outline the scientific and resource challenges to achieving a universal coronavirus vaccine and cite ways in which Congress can work with NIAID to expedite these initiatives.

¹ Arthur Allen, "How the feds missed their chance at a coronavirus vaccine," Politico (Jan. 31, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/31/coronavirus-vaccine-missed-chance-109709>.

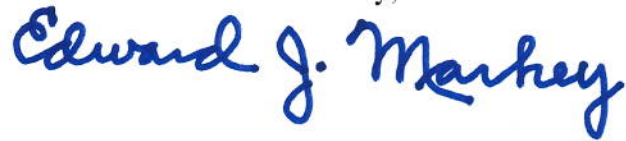
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Thank you for your attention to our request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to mitigate the health and economic toll these infectious diseases place on American communities and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "E" at the beginning.

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator