

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “Bioresearch Labs and Inactivation of Dangerous Pathogens”
September 27, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today’s hearing examines a very important issue to ensure safety at bioresearch laboratories - the inactivation of dangerous pathogens. In order for the federal government to conduct critical research on diagnostic tests or vaccines to protect us from diseases while safeguarding national security against bioterrorism, inactivation is a safety matter we need to get right.

In recent years, several lapses at HHS agency and Defense Department labs potentially exposed personnel and other individuals to hazardous biological agents, all because these agents were not effectively inactivated, as had been believed. We cannot risk repeats of such episodes. Without improvements, another incident is likely to happen, and the consequences could be dire.

I recognize that the executive branch has taken several steps to improve lab safety since these lapses were detected, beginning in 2014. We are pleased to see agencies moving forward in the right direction, and I believe GAO’s recent report on inactivation provides a major step in the right direction. The nonpartisan watchdog has addressed an issue that has not gained enough attention, and today, we will hear how this report will provide much needed guidance for the regulators of the Federal Select Agent program to conduct proper oversight.

I thank the witnesses for their participation, and look forward to working in a bipartisan way to improve oversight and management of the Federal Select Agent program. Lives are on the line, and there is zero margin for error. We can and must do a better job.

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