



441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

March 7, 2023

The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Griffith:

I am pleased to respond to the Question for the Record associated with the February 1, 2023 hearing entitled "Challenges and Opportunities to Investigating the Origins of Pandemics and Other Biological Events." The enclosure contains GAO's response to the question. If you would like additional clarification, I can be reached by email at HowardK@gao.gov or at 202-512-6888.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen L. Howard".

Karen L. Howard, PhD
Acting Chief Scientist
Director of Science and Technology Assessment
Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics (STAA)

Enclosure

The Honorable Dr. Burgess

A simple yes or no please.

1. In your professional experience, could we have known the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic by March of 2020?

No.

For context, our research has shown that multiple lines of evidence are often needed to establish a pandemic's likely origin. In some cases, it may take decades of research to acquire such evidence. For example, we note in our recent technology assessment that it took approximately 13 years to determine the origin of the 2002-2003 SARS pandemic and approximately 7 years to determine the origin of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. (see [GAO-23-105406](#))