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February 5, 2026

Brian Stone
Chief of Staff, Acting Director
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Acting Director Stone:

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology writes to express serious concern regarding the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) role in enabling questionable scientific research publishing operations that threaten the integrity of National Science Foundation (NSF) funded research. These operations, termed "paper mills," are companies whose goal is to produce, sell, or facilitate the authorship of academic papers on a faster timeline than traditional methods.[1] While such services vary in legitimacy, those operating under CCP influence and funding are becoming major sources of falsified and plagiarized research. In some cases, U.S. research grants may even be awarded to individuals who collaborate with CCP-affiliated funding sources or who rely on falsified research originating from CCP paper mills.[2] This activity not only threatens the reliability of peer-reviewed journals but also the credibility and global leadership of American scientific research. Our Committee also seeks to assess the procedures NSF currently has in place, or plans to implement, to safeguard federally funded research from this type of fraud and to ensure the integrity of the research enterprise going forward.

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[1] Leslie Eastman, *Paper Mills, Sham Journals, and Stolen Reputation: Fraud and Greed are Poisoning Science*, LEGAL INSURRECTION (Sep. 2, 2025), https://legalinsurrection.com/2025/09/paper-mills-sham-journals-and-stolen-reputation-fraud-and-greed-are-poisoning-science/.

[2] Ryan Lovelace, *Taxpayer-funded Research Projects Didn't Check for Scientists Taking Money from China*, THE WASHINGTON TIMES (Jun. 10, 2022), https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/10/nih-funded-researchers-broke-rules-failing-require/; Robin McKie, *'The Situation has Become Appalling': Fake Scientific Papers Push Research Credibility to Crisis Point*, THE GUARDIAN (Feb. 3, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/science/2024/feb/03/the-situation-has-become-appalling-fake-scientific-papers-push-research-credibility-to-crisis-point.

According to available reports, articles based on fabricated data from paper mills are appearing in American academic journals with increasing frequency.[3] Paper mills thrive under the CCP's centralized system of academic incentives, which pressures researchers to continually publish papers to secure, maintain, or advance their positions.[4] An unfortunate feature of this "publish or perish" culture is the propensity for Chinese researchers to intentionally violate ethical and legal standards by deliberately fabricating data and findings.[5] For instance, a survey of medical residents at hospitals in southwest China found that 46.7% admitted to buying or selling papers, ghostwriting for others, or hiring ghostwriters to meet publication requirements.[6] Such increasingly frequent practices often produce highly misleading research from Chinese authors, who are under intense pressure to meet the CCP's strict and burdensome publication requirements.[7]

Moreover, a CCP policy issued in February 2020, which purports to ban institutions from monetarily rewarding authors for publishing papers, has proven unsuccessful due to loopholes and a lack of any real enforcement from the CCP.[8] According to the *MIT Technology Review*, Chinese universities awarded authors an average of $44,000 per paper published in the journals *Science* or *Nature* in 2016, with various smaller incentives for lesser-known journals.[9] These rewards have fueled a market for fabricated research, much of which has found its way into respected Western journals.[10] With such questionable publications among the most prolific and frequently cited, the rise of CCP-linked paper mills poses a serious threat to American research advancement.[11]

The real-world consequences of fraudulent research are well documented. For example, a 2006 study on the effects of Alzheimer's disease developed the "amyloid hypothesis," which the

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[3] *Id*.
[4] Isobel Cockerell, *China's 'Paper Mills' are Grinding Out Fake Scientific Research at an Alarming Rate*, CODA STORY (Nov. 9, 2020), https://www.codastory.com/disinformation/china-fake-scientific-research/; Smriti Mallapaty, *China Bans Cash Rewards for Publishing Papers*, NATURE (Feb. 28, 2020), https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00574-8.
[5] *Id*.
[6] *Supra* at 1.
[7] *Id*.
[8] *Supra* at 3.
[9] Emerging Technology from the arXiv, *The Truth about China's Cash-for-Publication Policy*, MIT TECHNOLOGY REVIEW (Jul. 12, 2017), https://www.technologyreview.com/2017/07/12/150506/the-truth-about-chinas-cash-for-publication-policy/.
[10] *See e.g.* Wiley, *Home* (last accessed Oct. 7, 2025), https://www.wiley.com/en-us/; Robin McKie, *'The Situation has Become Appalling': Fake Scientific Papers Push Research Credibility to Crisis Point*, THE GUARDIAN (Feb. 3, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/science/2024/feb/03/the-situation-has-become-appalling-fake-scientific-papers-push-research-credibility-to-crisis-point.
[11] *Id*.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) subsequently used to justify prioritizing related research.[12] This focus even led NIH to approve an experimental drug whose manufacturer stated it could stabilize amyloid proteins in the brain, halting Alzheimer's progression.[13] However, in 2021, the hypothesis was revealed to have been based on fabricated data.[14] This means that for 16 years, the bulk of Alzheimer's research funding and effort rested on a false foundation.[15]

In 2023 alone, Wiley, a prominent American academic publisher, retracted over 8,000 fabricated papers from one of its subsidiaries after uncovering widespread manipulation tied to paper mill operations.[16] This scandal ultimately led to the subsidiary's collapse.[17] Wiley's discovery of fraudulent papers across its broader portfolio showcases the level of paper mill proliferation in American journals and publishing companies.[18] While the total number of CCP-influenced paper mills remains unknown, investigations show that individual operations can generate hundreds of falsified papers each year.[19] Estimates suggest that more than 400,000 published studies worldwide may have originated from such disreputable sources.[20] This pervasive corruption pollutes scientific databases, compromises peer review, and misleads researchers who rely on credible findings to advance genuine science.

Such false research can negatively impact the scientific community and set back fundamental and critical research for years before it is identified. As a result, the credibility of NSF-funded research could be called into question, underscoring the need for heightened oversight and accountability.

To better understand NSF's current procedures for addressing these concerns, we respectfully request a briefing on this topic by February 27, 2026. We look forward to working together to protect taxpayer-funded research from the threats of malicious foreign interference. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Piquero of the Committee's majority staff at (202) 225-6371.

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[12] Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi, *How the Alzheimer's Research Scandal Set Back Treatment 16 Years*, DISCOVER (Oct. 11, 2022), https://www.discovermagazine.com/false-alzheimers-study-could-set-research-back-16-years-44171.
[13] *Id*.
[14] *Id*.
[15] *Id*.
[16] Robin McKie, *'The Situation has Become Appalling': Fake Scientific Papers Push Research Credibility to Crisis Point*, THE GUARDIAN (Feb. 3, 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/science/2024/feb/03/the-situation-has-become-appalling-fake-scientific-papers-push-research-credibility-to-crisis-point.
[17] *Supra* at 10.
[18] *Id*.
[19] Dalmeet Singh Chawla, *A Single 'Paper Mill' Appears to Have Churned Out 400 Papers, Sleuths Find*, SCIENCE (Feb. 27, 2020), https://www.science.org/content/article/single-paper-mill-appears-have-churned-out-400-papers-sleuths-find.
[20] Abalkina A. *Commercialization of Scientific Misconduct: The Challenge of Paper Mills*. EUR J PUBLIC HEALTH. 2024 Oct 28;34(Suppl 3):ckae144.679. doi: 10.1093/eurpub/ckae144.679. PMCID: PMC11517752.

Sincerely,

Brian Babin
Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Rich McCormick
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

cc: Zoe Lofgren, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology; Emilia Sykes, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight