



Written by [Peter Rykowski](#) on September 6, 2023

Wisconsin Bill Would Ban Gain-of-function Research in Higher Education

Wisconsin legislators have introduced legislation to ban gain-of-function by institutions of higher education.

Senate Bill 401 ([S.B. 401](#)) is introduced by Senators André Jacque (R-DePere) and Stephen Nass (R-Whitewater), and it is cosponsored by Representatives Elijah Behnke (R-Oconto), Ty Bodden (R-Hilbert), Janel Brandtjen (R-Menomonee Falls), David Murphy (R-Greenville), and Chuck Wichgers (R-Muskego).

If enacted, S.B. 401 would ban any institution of higher education in Wisconsin from conducting gain-of-function research, or from providing funding to another institution for that purpose. If a higher-education institution violates S.B. 401's provisions, the board overseeing that institution would be banned from giving it state funds for the next fiscal year.

Furthermore, S.B. 401 would require anyone seeking to conduct research on "a potentially pandemic pathogen" to submit a report to the state Department of Health Services explaining the project's methodology, scope, and other details.

In a press release announcing the bill, Representative Behnke [said](#):

Many people are not aware that one of the four main pandemic pathogen research facilities in the United States is right here in Madison. Even more disturbing is the fact that the lab in Madison has had numerous documented incidents that raise serious concerns about safety and the possibility of a lab leak. Working on a deadly H5N1 virus in that lab and manipulating it to be a threat to humans is both dangerous and disturbing.

Additionally, discussing S.B. 401 on *The New American TV*, Representative Bodden [said](#):

Our biggest issues [with gain-of-function] in this state have come from our universities, and particularly the University of Wisconsin-Madison. [S.B. 401] will basically just say ... 'enough's enough, there's been too much messing around,' and it's something we can't really afford to mess with — [there are] dangerous implications if things go south.

In a separate statement, Bodden [said](#), "The risks that come with these experiments are dangerous and mistakes could lead to catastrophe."



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These concerns are well-grounded. UW–Madison has been at the center of [multiple known incidents](#) — in 2009, 2013, and 2019 — where it did not properly report dangerous incidents involving gain-of-function research or otherwise violated regulations regarding such research.

On Friday, U.S. Representative Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio), chairman of the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, [started](#) an investigation into UW–Madison’s gain-of-function research. In a [letter](#) to Jennifer Mnookin, the university’s chancellor, he requested documents and other information regarding its gain-of-function research, noting that “UW’s claim that gain-of-function research is highly regulated is not supported by the facts.”

More broadly, gain-of-function research is extremely risky and dangerous, and it likely created Covid-19 to begin with. It is now [well-known](#) that the National Institutes of Health [funded](#) gain-of-function research in Wuhan, China. The lab in Wuhan [conducted](#) dangerous experimentation on viruses just before the outbreak, and Covid is now widely [accepted](#) — despite [attempts](#) to [cover it up](#) — to have [leaked](#) from the lab.

The Wisconsin Legislature would be wise to outlaw gain-of-function research at higher-education institutions — and, more broadly, to protect and restore the medical freedom of Wisconsinites.

Wisconsin residents can contact their legislators in support of S.B. 401 by visiting The John Birch Society’s legislative alert [here](#). Everyone can take action to protect medical freedom by visiting JBS’s action project page [here](#).



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