

Rep. Behnke: Introduces Gain of Function legislation

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Madison – State Representative Elijah Behnke (R-Oconto) issued the following statement regarding legislation authored by Rep. Elijah Behnke, Sen. André Jacque, and Rep. Ty Bodden prohibiting institutions of higher education from conducting gain of function experimentation in Wisconsin:

“Gain of function research involves improving the ability of a pathogen to cause disease. Manipulating viruses to enhance transmissibility or virulence is extremely dangerous. Given the fact that there are hundreds of millions of possible mutations that can occur with a virus, there is little to no benefit from running these experiments. With this type of research we are one accident away from disaster.

“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.

“The National Institutes of Health was so concerned about gain of function research that they banned it from 2014 to 2017. They should have never lifted that ban. There are recent serious reports including those from the FBI and the Department of Energy concluding that SARS-CoV-2 likely originated from a lab leak. Having an incident in Wisconsin would be catastrophic, and it is something we cannot risk.”