Office of the Director of National Intelligence

16 June 2026

Hana Mensendiek
US Right to Know
4096 Piedmont Avenue, #963
Oakland, CA 94611-5221
hana@usrtk.org

Re: Litigation 25-cv-02164 | ODNI FOIA Case DF-2025-00480

Dear Ms. Mensendiek:

This letter is the final response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), dated 23 May 2025 and received on 27 May 2025, in which you requested:

"Assessment(s) and/or report(s) on the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic that have been produced by the ODNI since it released its declassified version of the report, 'Potential Links Between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Origin of the COVID-19 Pandemic,' in June 2023."

Your request was processed in accordance with the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended. This response addresses two (2) documents, Bates Pages 25-cv-02164 (DF-2025-00480) 000003 – 000021. ODNI considered the foreseeable harm standard as part of the review process and determined that certain information must be withheld pursuant to the following FOIA exemptions:

- (b)(1), which applies to information that is currently and properly classified pursuant to Executive Order 13526, Section 1.4(c).

- (b)(3), which applies to information exempt from disclosure by statute. The relevant statute includes the National Security Act of 1947, as amended:

    - Section 102A(h)(1) (codified at 50 U.S.C. § 3024(h)(1)), which mandates the protection of intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, and Section 102A(l) (codified at 50 U.S.C. § 3024 (l)), which protects the names and identifying information of ODNI personnel.

- (b)(5), which applies to information that concerns communications within or between agencies that are protected by legal privileges.

- (b)(6), which applies to information, the release of which would clearly constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) withheld information pursuant to FOIA exemptions (b)(1) in accordance with E.O. 13526, Section 1.4(c); and (b)(3). The relevant (b)(3) statutes include:

- The National Security Act of 1947, as amended, 50 U.S.C § 3024 (h)(1), Section 102A (h)(1), and
- The Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 U.S.C. § 3507, as amended, Section 6.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) withheld information pursuant to FOIA exemption (b)(1) in accordance with E.O. 13526, Section 1.4(c).

The Department of Energy withheld information pursuant to FOIA exemption (b)(1) in accordance with E.O. 13526, Section 1.4(a).

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) withheld information pursuant to FOIA exemptions (b)(1) in accordance with E.O. 13526, Section 1.4(c); (b)(3); (b)(5); and (b)(6). The relevant (b)(3) statutes are 10 U.S.C. § 424 and 50 U.S.C. §3024 (h)(1).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) withheld information pursuant to FOIA exemptions (b)(1) in accordance with E.O. 13526, Section 1.4(c); (b)(3); (b)(6); and (b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(D) and (b)(7)(E). The relevant (b)(3) statute is 50 U.S.C. § 3024 (h)(1).

The Department of State (DOS) a withheld information pursuant to FOIA exemptions (b)(1) in accordance with E.O. 13526, Section 1.4(c); and (b)(5).

If you have questions, your attorney may contact Brian Levy of the Department of Justice at Brian.Levy2@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,

Louis P. DiNatale III

Louis P. DiNatale III
Chief, Information Management Office

Enclosure
Bates Pages 25-cv-02164 (DF-2025-00480) 000003 – 000021

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL

30 October 2023 (b)(3) [redacted]

To: (U) Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence

From: (U) (b)(3),(b)(6) [redacted], National Intelligence Officer (b)(3) [redacted], National Intelligence Council

Subject: (U) **IC Posture Against COVID-19 Origins Key Intelligence Gaps**

Reference: (b)(3) [redacted] In response to your request for the key intelligence gaps related to COVID-19 origins and the IC's strategy to address the gaps.

(b)(3) [redacted] The IC continues to seek intelligence reporting and other sources of information to narrow or close key intelligence gaps (KIG) related to the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. All agencies view both natural and laboratory-associated origins scenarios as plausible and have focused on four KIGs aligned against both hypotheses:

- (b)(3) [redacted] KIG 1: **Details About Earliest COVID-19 Cases.** Information about the earliest case data from China would help the IC narrow potential scenarios of how the first human infection was caused. For example, if the earliest cases can be geolocated outside Wuhan in areas not known to be associated with previous field research, then that would strongly suggest a natural origin hypothesis was more likely than a laboratory-associated scenario.

- (b)(3) [redacted] KIG 2: **Presence of Pre-Pandemic Holdings of SARS-CoV-2 or Progenitor Virus in a Laboratory.** Information indicating that a PRC laboratory held the virus or a closely related species would be a significant factor supporting laboratory origin; although the IC would need to weigh how this information aligns with potential laboratory-related exposure routes.

- (b)(3) [redacted] KIG 3: **PRC Leadership Awareness of Evidence Implicating Natural Origin or a Laboratory-Associated Event.** Information that clarifies Beijing's potential awareness at the Politburo-level or above of direct evidence supporting or excluding either hypothesis or that reveals any leadership suppression of results of internal origins investigations that they perceive would embarrass the PRC.

- (b)(3) [redacted] KIG 4: **Identification of a Reservoir or Intermediate Hosts of SARS-CoV-2 or Progenitor Virus in Nature.** Identification of hosts in nature would allow the IC to better understand—and potentially narrow—candidate natural or laboratory scenarios involving those animals.

(b)(3) [redacted] The IC continues to evaluate classified information and new technical data from open-source reporting to identify additional opportunities to advance collection against PRC's public health and military entities who conduct biological research as well as organizations that may have been or continue to be involved in COVID-19 origin

(U) *This memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer (NIO)* (b)(3) [redacted]. *It was drafted by the National Intelligence Council and coordinated with* (b)(3) [redacted]. *Questions may be directed to the NIO on secure* (b)(3) [redacted]

(b)(3) [redacted]

investigations. Although all IC agencies remain poised to answer COVID-19 taskings, current IC personnel with relevant technical or regional expertise are not singularly focused on COVID-19 origins and work the issue as part of broader portfolios, such as global biological warfare trends, public health issues, or China political and military issues. Below are highlights of specific agencies' efforts relevant to the COVID-19 origins KIGs:

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted] CIA will review new intelligence and open-source reporting on all four KIGs should it become available and is prepared to do the following:

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted]
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted]
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted]
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted]

(b)(3) **DHS** does not have any ongoing or planned production focused on COVID-19 origins. (b)(1) [redacted]

(b)(3) **DIA's National Center for Medical Intelligence (NCMI)** continues to push COVID-19 origins requirements as part of its overall mission to target and monitor biosafety level (BSL)-3 and BSL-4 facilities as well as to enhance biosecurity and biodefense (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted]

- (b)(3)) KIG 1: If new intelligence on the earliest COVID-19 cases becomes available, DIA/NCMI will review and update our assessment, as appropriate.
- (b)(3)) KIG 2: NCMI remains ready to assess new or unexploited genomic sequences.
- (b)(3)) KIG 3: NCMI continues to push requirements to collection streams to identify additional information about (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted] on reverse genetics systems, the use of those for vaccine-related research, and any gain of function work in coronavirus and influenza and the use of nanotechnology, synthetic biology, military-civil fusion, clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR), and pathogens for military or dual-use applications.

- (b)(3) KIG 4: NCMI remains ready to assess new or unexploited genomic sequences, (b)(1),(b)(3) additional genetic data on coronaviruses from animal hosts.

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)

- (b)(3)) (b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1)
- (b)(3)) (b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1)

(b)(3)) **FBI** continues to pursue, analyze, and collect new intelligence and information (b)(3),(b)(7)(E)

(b)(3) (b)(1)

(b)(3) **NIC-**(b)(3) continues to prioritize COVID-19 origins analysis, coordinating and providing feedback to analysts and collectors to emphasize timely and robust information sharing across the (b)(3) and global health communities. The NIC will continue to facilitate communications across the IC's community of interest on COVID-19 origins as well as to host appropriately cleared outside experts for analytic outreach. The NIC remains prepared to brief or release our assessments to additional partners and to assist with the declassification and public release of related information, pending collector's approvals and leadership direction.

- (U) KIG 1: No specific action planned.
- (U) KIG 2: No specific action planned.
- (b)(3)) KIG 3: NIC-(b)(3) is working with regional collectors on renewing leadership requirements.

- (U//(b)(3)) KIG 4: NIC-(b)(3) is hosting an analytic outreach event for the IC to engage with computational biologists in November.

(b)(3)) (b)(1),(b)(3)

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)

(U) (b)(5)

(b)(1),(b)(3)

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

17 January 2025 (b)(3) [redacted]

(U) Updated IC Assessments of COVID-19 Origins

(U) Key Takeaways

(U) ***Scope Note:*** *This assessment responds to a tasking from the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for an update on the IC's judgments on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. The IC last published its coordinated update on the assessments of the origin of COVID-19 in March 2023.*

(b)(3) The IC continues to assess that the two leading hypotheses for the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic — natural origin or research-related incident—remain plausible. Since our last IC assessment in 2023, CIA has more precisely defined its position. It continues to maintain that both hypotheses are plausible explanations, but now assesses—(b)(3) [redacted] that a research-related hypothesis is more likely than a natural origin hypothesis.[1] The rest of the IC has not changed their assessments. They concluded the new data or reporting since 2023 either support both hypotheses, do not exclude one hypothesis over the other, or fail to provide credible information outlining a specific pathway. Two agencies, however, have changed their confidence levels in some of their judgments because of new reporting.

- (b)(3) [redacted] Most of the IC continues to assess that SARS-CoV-2—the virus that causes COVID-19—was not genetically engineered. (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(7)(E) [redacted], while (b)(1) [redacted]
- (b)(3) [redacted] (b)(1),(b)(3) [redacted]

(b)(3)) Since our last assessment in 2023, the IC has continued to evaluate new information from (b)(3) [redacted] open sources, revisit previous reporting, and consult with diverse technical experts to increase our understanding of the cause of the pandemic.[2] These efforts have led the CIA to decide to more precisely define its position. Other IC agencies have not changed their assessments because the new data or reporting since the 2023 assessment either support both hypotheses, do not exclude one hypothesis over the other, or failed to provide credible information outlining a specific pathway. Two agencies, however, have changed their confidence levels in some of their assessments because of the new reporting. (b)(1) [redacted]

(U) *This assessment was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer (NIO)* (b)(3) [redacted]. *It was drafted by the National Intelligence Council* (b)(3) [redacted]. *Questions may be directed to the NIO* (b)(3) [redacted].

(b)(3) [redacted]

- (U) The natural origin hypothesis includes a multitude of scenarios in which humans could have been infected with SARS-CoV-2—the virus that causes COVID-19—or a close progenitor through exposure to wild or domestic animals.[a] China is home to a diverse body of naturally occurring coronaviruses[3][4][5][6] found in a wide geographic area, and there is precedence for these viruses to emerge within human populations far from reservoir locations. For example, the coronavirus that is the closest known relative to SARS-CoV—the virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)—probably originated in Yunnan Province, according to scientific studies,[7] even though the first SARS outbreak detected in humans in 2003 occurred in Guangdong Province, hundreds of miles away.

- (U) The research-related[b] incident hypothesis also considers a broad range of potential initial human-infection scenarios from events in research facilities, such as government or university laboratories to research-related activities in the field, such as collecting samples from wild animals. In previous assessments, we referred to research-related incidents as "laboratory-associated incidents"; we are using this new terminology to more precisely capture the full range of possible research-related scenarios considered.

(U) Research-Related Origins

(b)(3)) CIA now joins DOE and FBI in assessing the more likely cause of the first human COVID-19 infection was a research-related incident. (b)(1),(b)(3)
(b)(1),(b)(3)

- (b)(3) CIA continues to assess that both research-related and natural origin scenarios of the COVID-19 pandemic are plausible, [16] but most of its analysts now judge a research-related origin of the pandemic is more likely.[17] (b)(1),(b)(3)
[8] CIA has low confidence in this judgment (b)(1),(b)(3)
Given CIA's (b)(3) , credible new (b)(3) open-source information could prompt CIA to change its assessment.[21]

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
(b)(1),(b)(3)

[a] (U) Plausible pathways of human contact with an infected animal include in an agricultural or other captive setting; via hunting or harvesting; or through the market supply chain, via transportation, slaughtering, and handling at markets.

[b] (b)(3) The FBI's assessment continues to be that a laboratory-associated incident was the most likely cause of the COVID-19 pandemic. The change in language to "research-related incidents" was done for clarity and does not reflect a change in the FBI's assessment.

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(7)(E)
(b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(7)(E)

(U) Natural Origins

(b)(3) Four agencies and the National Intelligence Council (NIC) continue to assess that natural contact with an animal infected with SARS-CoV-2—or a closely related progenitor virus—was the most likely cause of the first human COVID-19 infection. These agencies base this assessment on the precedent of past novel infectious disease outbreaks arising from zoonotic origins, the large diversity of animals susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection, and the wide range of scenarios—to include animal trafficking, farming, and sale—in China that enable zoonotic transmission.
(b)(1),(b)(3)

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
The NIC's (b)(3) a scientific study published in September 2024 that found wildlife DNA in environmental samples taken from the Huanan Seafood Market by PRC scientists in early 2020 that also tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, suggesting that animals at the market could have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 and been the sources of the first human infections.

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(5)
(b)(1),(b)(3)

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(5)
h-

(b)(1),(b)(3)

- (b)(3) (b)(1)(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(5)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(7)(E) (b)(1)

- (b)(3) (b)(7)(E)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(7)(E)

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)

(b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(5)

(b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(5) (b)(1),(b)(3)

- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)
- (b)(3) (b)(1),(b)(3)

(U) Ongoing Mission

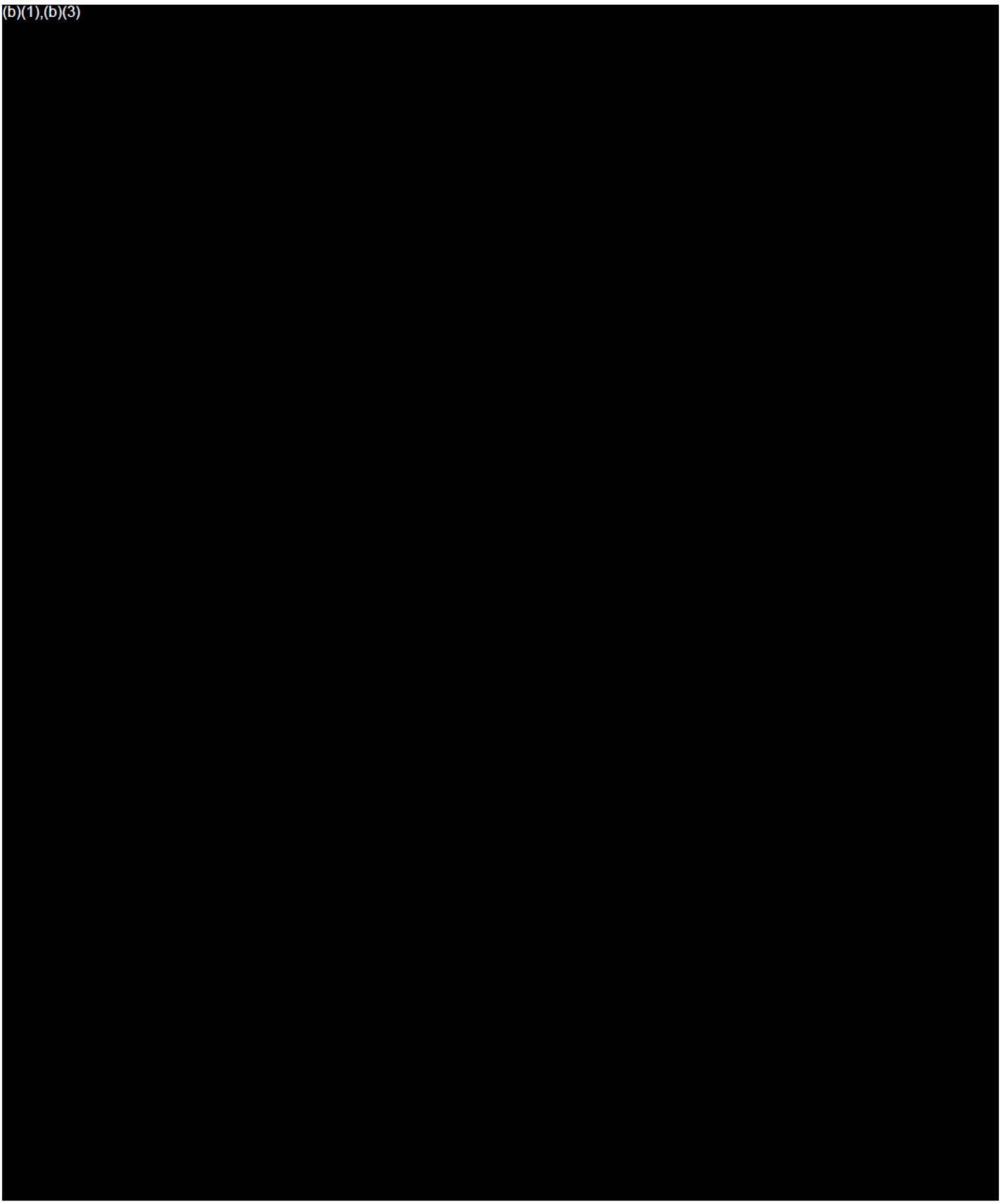
(b)(3) Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the IC has been working collaboratively to advance our insights, (b)(3), conduct new analytic outreach, clarify divergent views on key information, engage outside experts, (b)(3) The IC plans further engagements with outside experts to establish a new panel to conduct an independent study on the origins of COVID-19.

- (b)(3)) During the IC's 90-day study in 2021 into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, ODNI organized three separate IC-wide sessions with (b)(3) members of the Biological Sciences Expert Group (BSEG) to discuss the IC's relevant technical questions. Analysts at individual agencies also conducted their own analytic outreach with experts beyond the BSEG. (b)(3) We will look to expand and build upon our years of outreach as we advance (b)(3) analysis related to the origins of COVID-19.

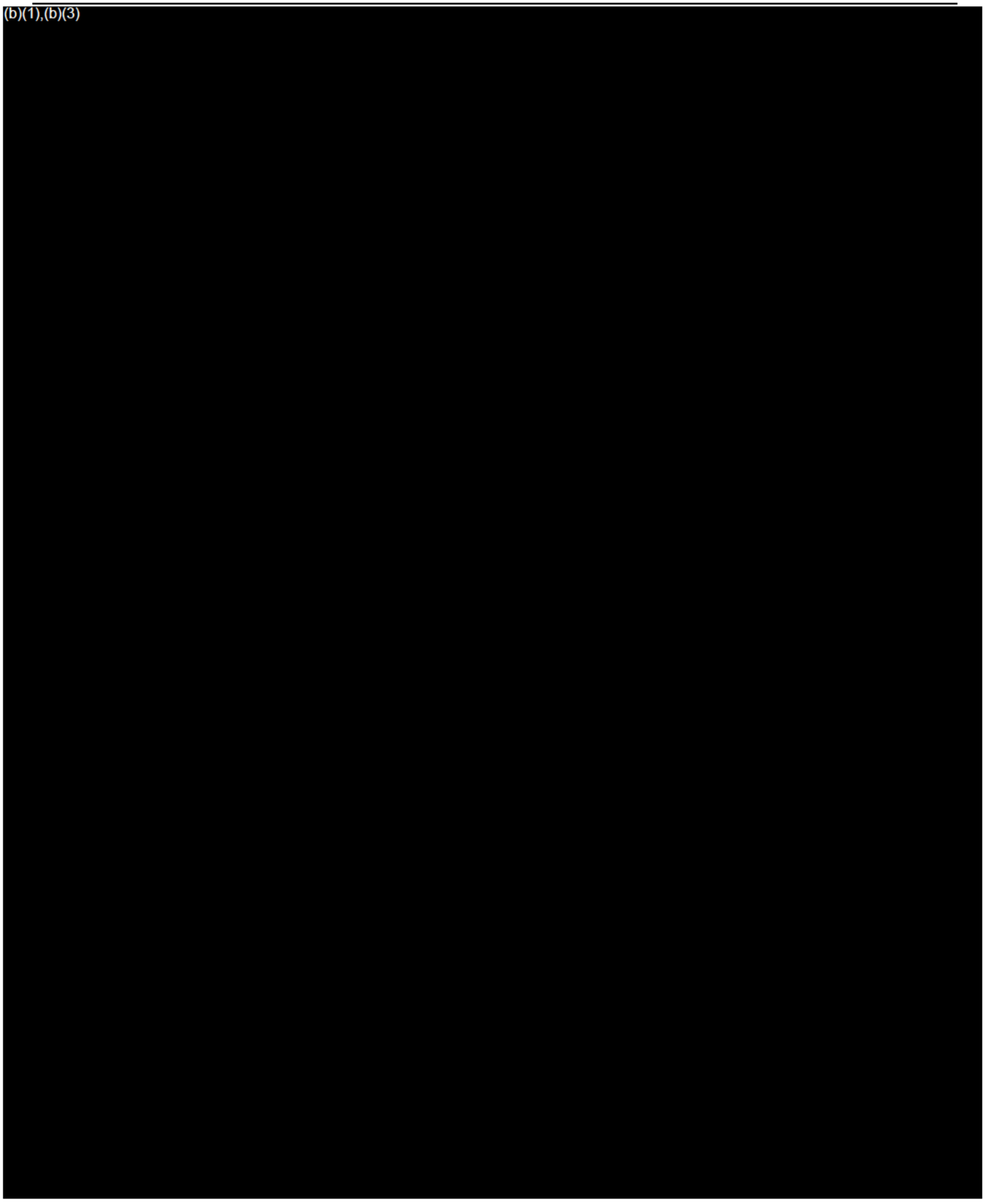
(b)(1),(b)(3),(b)(7)(E)

(b)(3)

(b)(1),(b)(3)



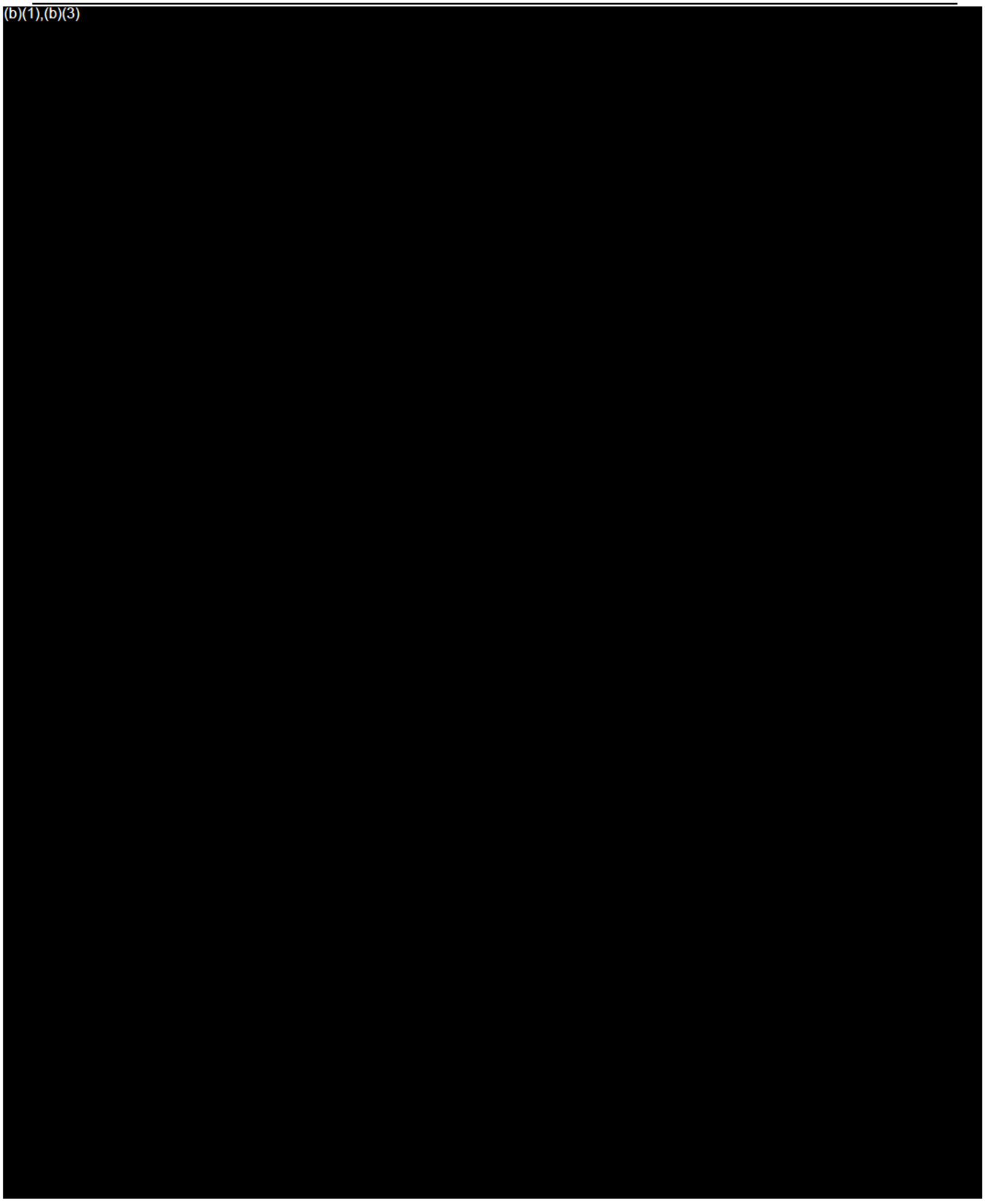
(b)(1),(b)(3)



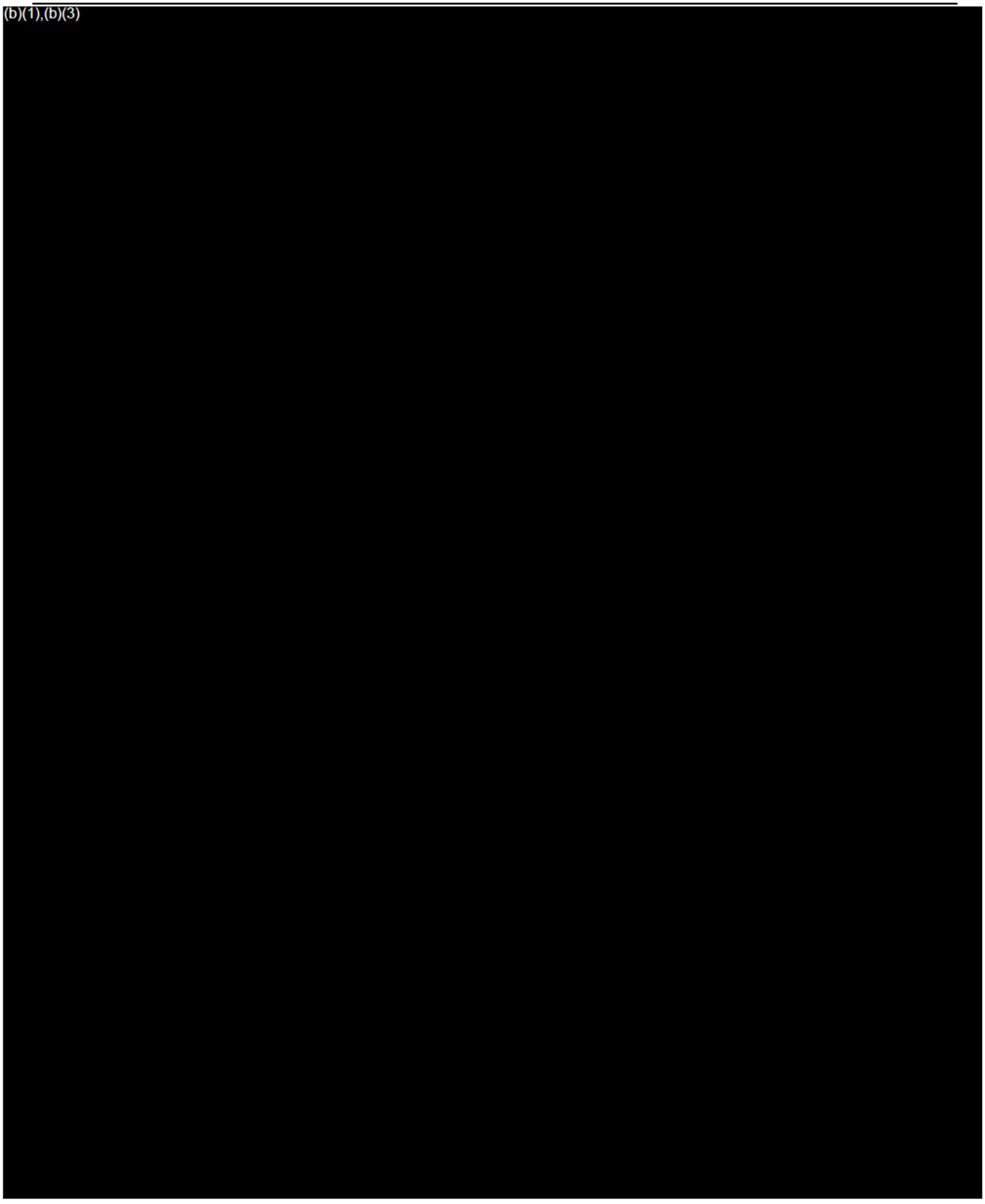
(b)(1),(b)(3)

(b)(1),(b)(3)

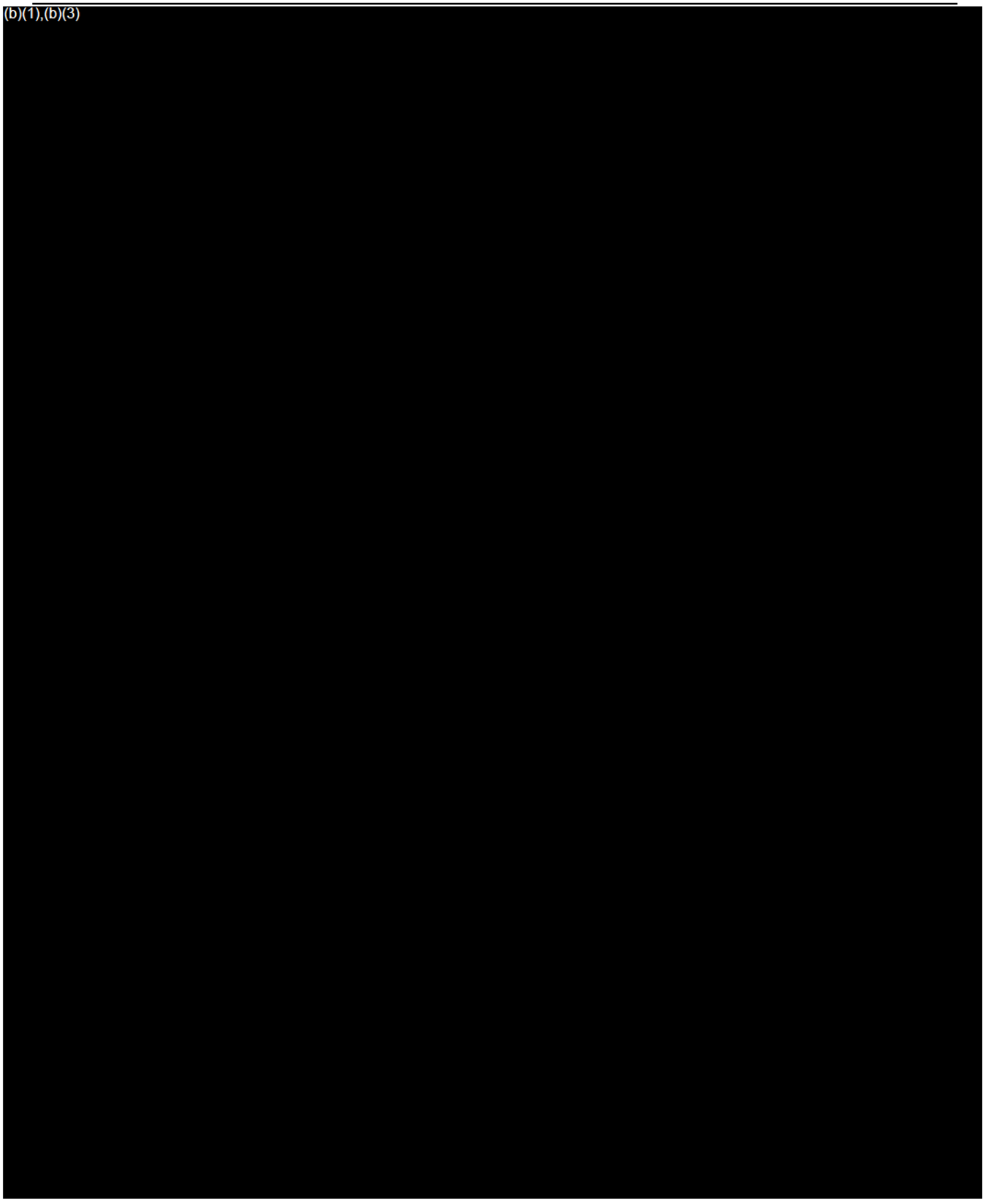
(b)(1),(b)(3)



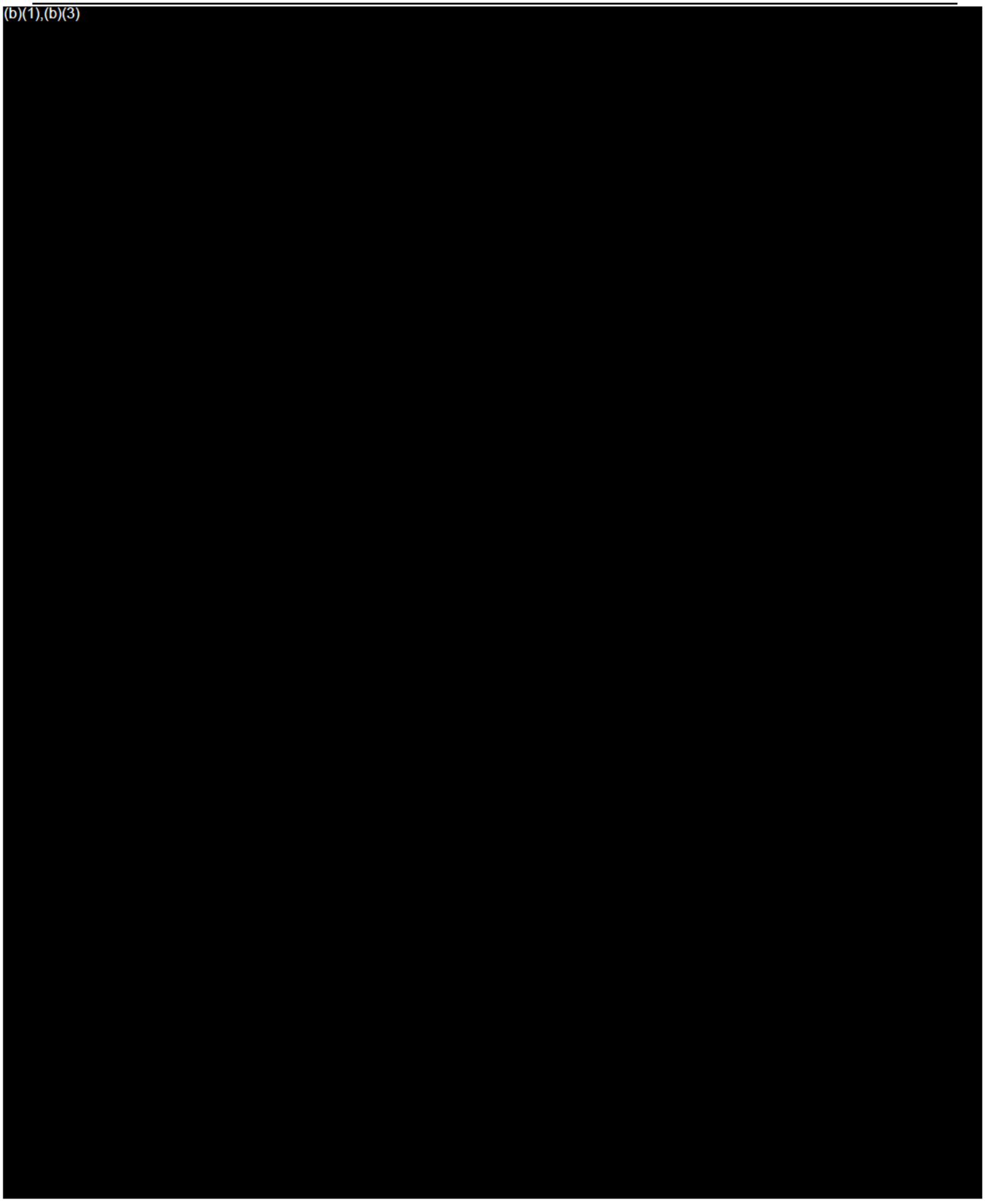
(b)(1),(b)(3)



(b)(1),(b)(3)



(b)(1),(b)(3)



(b)(1),(b)(3)