



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 495

Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals - Licensing and Regulation

March 2, 2023

Unfavorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our position on Senate Bill 495. The bill establishes requirements for the use and treatment of dogs or cats by research facilities and prohibits the use of certain dogs and cats for research or testing purposes.

While we join the sponsor in his efforts to reduce animal testing and are supportive of the overall concept of developing alternatives to using nonhuman animals in medical and product testing and research we feel that this is rather sweeping legislation that would add a new state regulatory office and set of procedures for licensing and monitoring animal research facilities that is a huge overstep from the current USDA requirements.

All laboratory animal work at USM institutions must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act, The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and other federal regulations. Researchers consider all alternatives to procedures by employing appropriate, protocol specific search strategies, regardless of species. They are guided by the approach of the Three Rs which represents a practical method for implementation referring to replacement, refinement, and reduction when deciding to use animals in research and in designing humane animal research studies. In terms of justifying the use of an animal model, the principal investigator must submit to the IACUC whether other alternatives (e.g. cell culture, computer/modeling/simulation) to animal usage exist and why they are not feasible for this particular research protocol.

It is important to remember that animal-based research has resulted in groundbreaking discoveries that have helped to save or improve the lives of countless individuals in the United States and throughout the world. At UMB for example, they have carried out major life saving medical research using animal models including the development of aromatase inhibitors for the treatment of breast cancer. In addition, animal-based research carried out by Maryland's Shock Trauma has led to major advances in life saving procedures such as the use of hypothermia to improve the survival of non-trauma cardiac arrest patients. Last year, University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM) faculty at the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), together known as the University of Maryland Medicine were able to successfully transplant a modified pig heart into an adult human with end-stage heart disease. Recently, UMCP's researchers were able to develop an inhalable coronavirus vaccine making it safe for children and the immunocompromised after conducting animal trials. More broadly, animal-based research has resulted in treatments for asthma, dementia, epilepsy, diabetes, high blood pressure, and numerous other medical conditions. We continue to see the benefits of animal-based research in our everyday lives and the lives of animals.

We conduct animal research models in conjunction with federal research grants and contracts. We therefore adhere to all federal regulations relating to animal research, our facilities are inspected once a year, are subject to unannounced inspections by federal agencies, have internal protocol measures and oversight in place and provide an annual report to the USDA as a registered research facility.

As written, SB 495 does not clearly define the term animal and does not specifically rule out applicability to other species that are commonly used in animal research. That ambiguity is concerning since the universe of animal populations that might be used in studies is a very large one. The bill also creates another level of licensing requirement and inspection cycle within the Maryland State Department of Agriculture with a specific focus on dogs and cats and already existing species covered as well as requiring additional reporting which is duplicative of the USDA requirements and guidelines. It also uses federal reporting to trigger state inspections of facilities which may be outsourced to contractors who are not held to the same inspection standards as of federal agency.

While animal-based research is necessary for the development of lifesaving and life altering treatments for people and animals, USM holds firm to the belief that we have an ethical and moral responsibility to provide quality, compassionate and humane treatment of all our animals. We also recognize that our responsibility to our animals does not end when a research project concludes. We also have adoption policies in place, including those already related the dogs and cats under Maryland law, and continue to make every effort when an opportunity presents itself for adoption of our covered research animals.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

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