

TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
*Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee*

FROM: Michael Huber
Director, Maryland Government Affairs

SB537
Unfavorable

DATE: February 27, 2025

RE: SB537 Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals - Adoption and Reporting Requirements

Johns Hopkins opposes **SB537 Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals - Adoption and Reporting Requirements**. This bill requires research and testing facilities in the state to report annually to the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. The report must state the number of dogs or cats owned and used by the facility and the number of dogs or cats released to animal rescue organizations. The Department will then aggregate this data for an annual, public report. This bill requires institutions of higher education that use animals in research or testing would have to report to the General Assembly on the results of any inspection by the Department of Agriculture, including any violations.

As the leading research institution in the state, Johns Hopkins University & Medicine takes seriously its mission to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence in medical education, research, and clinical care. The use of animals is essential to the success of our mission.

Almost every medical advancement – from COVID-19 vaccines, insulin therapy for diabetes, treatments for cardiovascular diseases, cancer therapy to organ transplants – are the direct result of research performed on animals. Simply put, modern medicine, as we understand it today, would not exist without research performed in animals.

For example, The State of Maryland played a key role in the development of COVID-19 vaccines. Beginning five years ago, as COVID-19 initially spread world-wide, institutions, including Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland, and private companies, rapidly ramped up research to develop new ways to treat and prevent COVID-19. The vaccines and therapeutics developed by biomedical researchers during this time were tested on animals before human trials as an integral part of development. Different kinds of institutions and facilities contributed to this effort, leading to widely available COVID-19 vaccines in an unexpectedly short time. These efforts were central to containing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research facilities are subject to extensive oversight by multiple federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health – Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The reports generated from that oversight are publicly available. As such, this bill is unnecessary.

For the reasons stated above, we urge an UNFAVORABLE committee report on **Senate Bill 537**.