

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

SB536
Unfavorable

FROM: Michael Huber
Director, Maryland Government Affairs

DATE: February 27, 2025

RE: SB536 Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals - Regulation

Johns Hopkins opposes **SB 536 – Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals – Regulation**. This bill seeks to regulate research and testing facilities that use animals. The bill places restrictions on the use of dogs and cats by these facilities. The bill prohibits the use of what it terms traditional animal test methods where an alternative test method has been approved. There are significant penalties for violations of the bill.

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. Starting 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.

Unfortunately, this bill will hobble that mission and negatively impact critical lifesaving research – including vaccine development and cancer treatments – happening at research institutions throughout the state in several ways. It is duplicative with existing federal law. It ignores critical, and effective internal policies.

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), and we are committed to complying with all federal laws that govern the use of animals in research.

Additionally, there are already mechanisms in place to encourage the use of alternative methods. All researchers at Johns Hopkins, for instance, who use animals for research and teaching must have a protocol approved with the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). In order to obtain approval, they must demonstrate that there are *no scientifically viable alternatives available*.

In fact, Johns Hopkins is a major supporter of alternatives to animal testing. In fact, Johns Hopkins is home to the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT). Housed in the Bloomberg School of Public Health and founded in 1981, CAAT supports the creation, development, validation, and use of alternatives to animals in research, product safety testing, and education. Researchers at Johns Hopkins have led the way in developing alternatives to animal testing.

The robust existing federal oversight and internal procedures obviate the need to establish a new layer of regulation. Adding another layer of oversight will be confusing for researchers in Maryland and their teams, will mean more time away from their labs and research, and generally make it harder to perform the research that is vital to our mission and provides significant benefit to our patients and to society.

For the reasons stated above, we urge an UNFAVORABLE committee report on **Senate Bill 536**.