

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

**SB535**  
**Unfavorable**

**FROM:** Michael Huber  
*Director, Maryland Government Affairs*

**DATE:** February 27, 2025

**RE:** SB535 Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals - Licensing and Regulations

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Johns Hopkins opposes **SB535 Research Facilities and Testing Facilities That Use Animals - Licensing and Regulations**. This bill requires facilities that use animals in research or testing be licensed by the State Department of Agriculture. Licensure requires inspection. The bill also establishes a State Inspector of Animal Welfare in the Department of Agriculture. The State may delegate inspections to animal welfare organizations, local animal control agencies, and other entities. This bill requires institutions of higher education that use animals in research or testing 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. 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. In addition to being essential to basic scientific discovery, animal research is also heavily regulated at the federal and institutional level.

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). Facilities are subject to unannounced inspections by the USDA. Programs involving animals are designed to assure compliance with the federal Animal Welfare Act and the “Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.” Guidelines, standard

operating procedures (SOPs), and protocols are in place, and strictly adhered to, that address animal housing and care, veterinary medical care, facilities management, training, and occupational health. The results of these inspections are readily available online.

For the reasons stated above, we urge an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on **Senate Bill 535**.