

02/25/2025

Subject: Support for SB 535, SB 536, and SB 537 – Strengthening Oversight and Protections for Animals in Research and Testing

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

On behalf of the National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) and our Maryland supporters, I write to express our strong support for Senate Bills 535, 536, and 537, which collectively establish critical reforms for research and testing facilities using animals in Maryland. These bills introduce necessary oversight, humane protections, and transparency measures to ensure ethical treatment of animals in scientific settings.

SB 535 – Extending Oversight to All Animals Used in Research and Testing

This legislation mandates that private research and testing facilities using animals obtain a state license, comply with annual inspections, and report violations. The bill also creates a State Inspector of Animal Welfare to enforce these standards.

Critically, SB 535 extends oversight to animals not currently covered under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The AWA, which is the primary federal law governing the treatment of animals in research, excludes roughly 95% of animals used in experiments, including rats, mice, birds, and fish. This means that these animals are not entitled to even the most basic protections such as proper housing, veterinary care, or consideration of alternatives to their use in testing. By requiring state licensure and oversight for these animals used at private facilities, SB 535 is a crucial step in closing a regulatory gap and ensuring that more animals receive at least fundamental protections.

Furthermore, a state-based licensing and inspection system will:

- Improve transparency in animal research and testing.
- Hold facilities accountable for AWA violations.
- Establish funding for oversight through the Animals in Research Fund.

By instituting proactive state regulation, Maryland can enhance the welfare of animals used in scientific settings and ensure that all species receive consideration in laboratory conditions.

SB 536 – Restricting Harmful Practices and Encouraging Modern Alternatives

SB 536 takes essential steps to limit harmful and unnecessary animal testing while encouraging the development and use of scientifically valid non-animal alternatives. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires private facilities in the state to use non-animal testing methods for household cleaners, drugs, pesticides, vaccines, and chemicals when available and approved.

- Prohibits testing on dogs or cats for products like pesticides and food additives unless mandated by federal law.
- Bans cruel laboratory practices, including devocalizing dogs and performing inhumane euthanasia.
- Implements reporting requirements on animal use in product testing, adoption of research animals, and the use of alternative test methods.

Scientific research increasingly recognizes that many animal-based testing methods fail to predict human outcomes. A 2022 study published in *The Journal of Translational Medicine* found that over 90 percent of drugs that pass preclinical animal testing fail in human clinical trials due to safety or efficacy issues. By requiring the use of alternative testing methods when available, Maryland can help accelerate the transition to more accurate, human-relevant models such as organ-on-a-chip technology, computational modeling, and advanced in-vitro methods.

SB 537 – Adoption and Reporting Requirements for Research and Testing Facilities

SB 537 ensures that dogs and cats no longer needed for research or testing purposes are given a chance at adoption. The bill requires facilities to:

- Make reasonable efforts to place retired animals in adoptive homes or with animal rescue organizations.
- Report annually on the number of dogs and cats used, released for adoption, and the organizations receiving them.

In the United States, a 2018 study found that public opinion on the morality of animal research was declining. By requiring adoption efforts and reporting, Maryland can set a humane precedent that aligns with the values of its citizens.

Together, SB 535, 536, and 537 create a comprehensive framework that improves oversight, promotes humane alternatives, and ensures accountability in Maryland's research and testing facilities. NAVS urges the Committee to support these bills and advance Maryland as a leader in ethical and scientifically progressive research practices.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me for further discussion or clarification.

Sincerely,



Meredith Blanchard
Senior Manager, Policy and Advocacy
National Anti-Vivisection Society