

TO: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair
House, Health and Government Operations Committee

HB1448

FROM: Michael Huber
Director, Maryland Government Affairs

Unfavorable

DATE: March 10, 2025

RE: HB 1448 – Animal Testing and Research - Alternative Nonanimal Test Methods

Johns Hopkins University and Medicine urges an **unfavorable** report on **HB 1448 – Animal Testing and Research - Alternative Nonanimal Test Methods**.

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 and places significant reporting requirements on research facilities.

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 3 years ago, as COVID 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. Many 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 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. AAALAC accreditation, which Johns Hopkins has achieved, also attests to the quality of the animal-based research done in these programs.

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 IACUC. In order to obtain approval, they must demonstrate that there are *no scientifically viable alternatives available*. If animals must be used, the refinement of the procedures, including the use of analgesics and other pain-relieving methods are employed to minimize the pain and distress the animals may experience because of the procedure.

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.

While we have been supportive of the expansion of study of alternatives to animal testing, the science simply is not yet there to mandate their use. Even with the provisions included in this bill, it will send the wrong message about the necessity of using animals in research. Additionally, this bill would add unnecessary administrative effort and expense like recordkeeping and reporting when federal research funding is currently under threat.

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 report on **House Bill 1448**.