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RE: SUPPORT for SB 422 & SB 423

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 422 and Senate Bill 423 on behalf of our supporters throughout the state of Maryland. Together, these bills represent thoughtful, responsible, and forward-looking reforms to Maryland law governing the use of animals in research and testing facilities.

SB 422 enhances transparency and ensures meaningful adoption opportunities for dogs and cats used in research and testing. SB 423 modernizes Maryland's statutory framework by prioritizing scientifically validated non-animal methods, establishing humane treatment standards, and aligning state law with evolving scientific best practices.

These measures advance scientific integrity, ethical responsibility, and public trust.

Support for SB 422 – Transparency and Adoption Protections

SB 422 appropriately expands Maryland's existing adoption protections to include both research and testing facilities. Under the bill, facilities must take reasonable steps to provide for the adoption of dogs and cats no longer used for scientific experiments, including establishing private placement processes and working with approved rescue organizations.

This reform ensures that animals who have already endured laboratory use are given a meaningful opportunity for placement in loving homes. Many dogs and cats used in laboratories are highly adoptable when given appropriate behavioral assessment and support. Adoption programs in other states have proven manageable for facilities.

SB 422 also strengthens transparency by requiring research and testing facilities to report annually the number of dogs and cats owned and used, as well as the number released to rescue organizations. The Secretary must aggregate and publish this information. Public reporting promotes accountability, enables data-driven policy evaluation, and reassures Maryland residents that animals are not being discarded without oversight.

In addition, SB 422 requires schools and institutions of higher education to report the results of USDA or other federal inspections, including violations, to the General Assembly. This provision enhances legislative oversight and ensures that inspection findings do not remain inaccessible to policymakers or the public.

These are balanced, reasonable measures that improve oversight without impeding scientific activity.

Support for SB 423 – Modernizing Animal Testing Standards

SB 423 builds on transparency reforms by modernizing how and when animals may be used in testing facilities.

1. Promoting Scientifically Valid Human-Relevant Methods

The bill defines and prioritizes “alternative test methods” that do not use live vertebrate animals and produce *equivalent or better* scientific quality. Testing facilities may not use traditional animal test methods if a federal agency has approved an alternative or granted a waiver.

This approach reflects current federal policy trends and scientific consensus that validated non-animal methods—such as computational toxicology, high-throughput screening, and in-vitro systems—can provide more human-relevant data while reducing cost and time. Importantly, the bill does not prohibit animal testing outright; it requires its use only when scientifically necessary and when no accepted human-based methods exists.

By doing so, Maryland positions itself as a leader in 21st-century science while maintaining safeguards for public health and safety.

2. Humane Treatment Standards

SB 423 establishes clear humane protections for dogs and cats used in research and testing. Facilities may not use or perform devocalization surgeries on dogs or cats. Additionally, euthanasia is restricted to lethal injection of sodium pentobarbital administered by or under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

These provisions set minimum humane standards consistent with widely accepted veterinary practices and ethical expectations. They prevent particularly troubling procedures while preserving necessary veterinary authority and oversight.

3. Enhanced Reporting and Accountability

Beginning January 31, 2028, testing facilities must report annually the number of each species used, the number of dogs and cats released for adoption, the types and numbers of alternative and traditional test methods used, any waivers relied upon, and the purposes of testing conducted. Research facilities must also report adoption outcomes.

The Secretary must aggregate and publish this information.

This level of reporting allows Maryland to track progress in the reduction and replacement of animal testing and ensures that policy goals translate into measurable outcomes.

Advancing Ethical Science and Public Trust

Together, SB 422 and SB 423 advance three core principles:

1. **Replacement** – Encouraging scientifically validated non-animal methods when available.
2. **Reduction** – Requiring minimization of animal use where alternatives are not available.
3. **Responsibility** – Ensuring humane standards, transparency, and adoption pathways.

These reforms do not impede legitimate biomedical research, which is explicitly distinguished from certain testing provisions in SB 423. Rather, they align Maryland law with evolving scientific capabilities and public expectations.

Maryland has the opportunity to lead by adopting policies that reflect both innovation and compassion.

For the reasons outlined above, the National Anti-Vivisection Society respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 422 and Senate Bill 423.

Thank you for your consideration and your past actions to protect animals in laboratories.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meredith Blanchard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meredith Blanchard
Director of Advocacy and Policy
National Anti-Vivisection Society