

Jan. 24, 2024

Letter from Michigan Physicians and Scientists to the House Agriculture Committee in Support of HB 4849

Dear Chair Miller and Members of the Agriculture Committee:

As Michigan physicians and scientists, we are writing to ask you to support House Bill 4849 and vote it out of your committee. This bill addresses a long-ignored ethical and scientific problem in our state—namely, the use of dogs in painful, often deadly experiments that fail to benefit patients.

There is no need to subject our animal companions to painful experiments, and scientists are increasingly finding ways to conduct research without harming animals. Yet Michigan is still home to some of the longest-running and cruelest dog experiments in the country. Wayne State University subjects dogs to heart failure and hypertension experiments, which have gone on since 1991 without yielding any scientific advancements and cost taxpayers more than \$15 million.

Thousands of pages of public records reveal that dogs at Wayne State endure multiple surgeries in which university employees cut open the animals' chest cavities, insert devices in and around major blood vessels, stab catheters into their hearts, and “tunnel” cables and wires under their skin and out between the dogs' shoulder blades. The animals who survive the intensive surgeries are forced to run on treadmills while experimenters drastically raise their heart rate using implanted devices. This is repeated for days, weeks, or even months—depending on how long each dog can withstand it. By design, every dog will eventually die during the experiments—when their bodies give out or an implanted device breaks or malfunctions. One such dog was Queenie, who was killed by Wayne State in 2010 after being used in experiments for seven months. Many other dogs die due to severe internal bleeding. Some dogs are found dead in their cages. Wayne State may be the worst offender, but across Michigan, other dogs are used in painful experiments.

Under federal reporting requirements, experiments with animals are grouped into three categories: one in which the animals do not experience pain and two in which pain is expected. There is no need to cause pain to dogs in order to conduct research. Across the country, researchers gather scientific insights from animals through nonharmful studies.

Human-relevant methods such as trials involving patients, population studies, and cell-based and computer-based models mean that we do not have to subject dogs to painful experiments. Igor Efimov, PhD, at George Washington University uses diseased hearts from patients undergoing transplants or hearts donated for research to collect human-relevant data. The experiments at Wayne State have been criticized by experts, including Dr. Michael Joyner of the Mayo Clinic, who conducts heart failure studies with human patients. The Texas Heart Institute, which is dedicated solely to addressing cardiovascular disease, stopped using dogs in studies in 2015.

Michigan patients deserve better. We urge you to advance HB 4849.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Very truly,

Catherine Badgley, PhD
Chelsea, Mich.
Professor, University of Michigan

Jan Cejka, PhD
Troy, Mich.

Anita Charochak, DO
Delton, Mich.

Karen Duquette, PhD
Ishpeming, Mich.

Carol Fletcher, RN, PhD
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Jennifer Giordano, DO
Port Austin, Mich.

Gertrude Gregory, MD
Saginaw, Mich.
*Graduate, Wayne State University School of
Medicine*

Toula Guilfoyle, DO
Commerce Township, Mich.
*Graduate, Michigan State University
College of Osteopathic Medicine*

Peter Hedderich, MD
Okemos, Mich.
*Graduate, Michigan State University
College of Human Medicine*

Maris Kazmers, MD
Okemos, Mich.
*Graduate, Wayne State University School of
Medicine*

Sharon Kemper, DO
Beverly Hills, Mich.
*Assistant Professor, Wayne State University
School of Medicine*

Sylvia Kosciolk, MD
Fenton, Mich.
*Graduate, University of Michigan Medical
School*

Madelyn Lew, MD
Dexter, Mich.
*Associate Professor, University of Michigan
Medical School*

Kathleen Longo, MD, MPH
Ann Arbor, Mich.
*Graduate, University of Michigan Medical
School*

Madhura Mansabdar, MD
Midland, Mich.

Kelly Orringer, MD
Ann Arbor, Mich.
*Clinical Associate Professor, University of
Michigan*

Catherine Perry, PhD
Niles, Mich.

Ann Poznanski, PhD, MD
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Leslie Quint, MD
Ann Arbor, Mich.
*Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan
Medical School*

Douglas Quint, MD
Ann Arbor, Mich.
*Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan
Medical School*

Mellisa Reznar, PhD, MPH
Berkley, Mich.

Susan Ritter, MD, MPH
Marquette, Mich.
*Graduate, Michigan State University
College of Human Medicine*

Joel Saper, MD
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Lawrence Schweinhart, PhD
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Barbara Siepierski, MD
Dearborn, Mich.
*Graduate, Wayne State University School of
Medicine*

Marc Touchman, MD
Ann Arbor, Mich.
*Graduate, University of Michigan Medical
School*

Tamara Wrone, PhD
Plymouth, Mich.

Sarah Yonder, MD, CDE
Sanford, Mich.
*Associate Professor, Central Michigan
University College of Medicine*

