

Date: March 8, 2023

To: Members of the House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Re: Input on HB2904 from Americans for Medical Progress

Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Tran and Members of the Committee:

I'm Paula Clifford writing from the nonprofit health research advocacy group Americans for Medical Progress. Our organization supports the advancement of human and animal medicine through responsible and highly regulated research in animals. Our staff is made up of individuals with several decades of experience working in a variety of health research settings. We also collaborate closely with universities and biomedical research companies. As a result, we are very familiar with not only their countless medical achievements but also the wide variety of hurdles that they face. However, Americans for Medical Progress is not a lobbying organization. We are therefore not taking an official position on HB2904. Instead, the information below is meant to serve as background data to help inform your decision-making process.

With that being said, we do have some serious concerns about HB2904, which in its current form would create duplicative reporting requirements for research organizations in the state of Oregon. The proposed legislation appears to come in direct response to criticisms leveled by animal research opposition groups, including those that have previously stated on the record that they are opposed to any and all animal-based advancements, despite their history of improving both human and animal health.

Most importantly however, this proposed legislation would do nothing to ensure that animals involved in necessary and highly beneficial biomedical research are well cared for. Under this proposed measure, the data which Oregon facilities would be required to gather, organize and submit to the State Veterinarian is for the most part readily available to lawmakers, regulators and the general public. To more clearly illustrate this point:

- The proposed requirement that facilities report the “total number of primates” housed at individual facilities is already tracked by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The information in question can be obtained at this link: www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalwelfare/sawa/awa-inspection-and-annual-reports. As you are aware, the USDA is the federal agency charged with enforcing the Animal Welfare Act
- The number of animals “used in research, testing or studies at the research facility” is also reported annually to the USDA. This same annual report (see above link) includes the number of animals not involved in research protocols (such as animals living in breeding colonies.)
- Year-to-year animal census changes, which include “transfers to and from the facility, births and deaths” via humane euthanization for federally funded research purposes is also tracked via reporting to the USDA (see above link).

- Imports of animals “purchased and sold” to individual research facilities (which are uncommon at National Primate Research Centers) are closely tracked by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to minimize infectious disease risks.
- Communications between enforcement agencies, which include unforeseen incidents are already publicly available. USDA inspection reports are posted on the USDA APHIS website. The information in question can be obtained at this link:
www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalwelfare/sawa/awa-inspection-and-annual-reports
- In addition, an entire online, searchable database of these records already exists. It is maintained by the nonprofit group Rise for Animals. Link:
<https://arlo.riseforanimals.org/records>
- Because the Oregon National Primate Research Center is part of the National Institutes of Health, a wealth of information describing ongoing research projects, grant amounts and other information is immediately accessible via the NIH RePORTER database located at reporter.nih.gov/

As for the oversight of animal-based research in the United States, our country has a robust, internationally respected and overlapping set of oversight systems which include a wide-ranging variety of laws, requirements and measures to help ensure animals involved in biomedical research are treated with kindness and respect.

Nonhuman primates are protected by the Animal Welfare Act, a large collection of federal laws that govern the treatment of animals involved in research, teaching and testing. The act also regulates their transportation. The AWA is not a static document. It is regularly updated with revisions/additions occurring in 1970, 1976, 1985, 1990, 2002, 2007, 2008 and 2013.

Federal inspectors employed by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service conduct unannounced inspections of all research facilities that house animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act. As we mentioned previously, the results of these inspections and any infractions are publicly reported. If a facility breaks the law, they can face fines or even the loss of their license in extreme cases.

In addition to these protections, every research facility is required to employ an attending veterinarian. In fact, many larger organizations, such as the Oregon National Primate Research Center, employ an entire team of veterinarians and animal care staff. These highly trained and committed individuals oversee research animals and provide day-to-day care and feeding.

There are also several controls in place to ensure proposed research in animals is thoroughly vetted by experts before it is allowed to take place. When seeking federal dollars, our nation’s top source of health research funding, researchers must explain in detail why certain animal species must be studied and why other alternatives - including non-animal options - are not sufficient. On top of that, the Animal Welfare Act requires research institutions that study animals to establish an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, which thoroughly reviews all animal-based studies before they are allowed to commence. IACUCs also conduct lab inspections of their own.

There are yet additional levels of oversight including animal care regulations for all National Institutes of Health-funded research. Many research organizations also obtain professional animal care accreditation, which seeks a standard of care above and beyond federal regulations.

As you can see, there is no shortage of reporting or oversight for animal research facilities in the United States. This is also why our organization has strong concerns about the legislation as currently written, as it appears to create new, duplicative and highly burdensome reporting requirements for research facilities.

If you have any follow up questions about the information we have provided, I invite committee members to contact me at paula@amprogress.org.

Thank you for your time,

Paula Clifford, MLA, RLATG, CVT
Executive Director
Americans for Medical Progress