

HB 4849: Ending Painful Taxpayer- Funded Dog Experiments

PhysiciansCommittee
for Responsible Medicine



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. The Legislature now has a lifesaving opportunity to address this issue by promoting modern, humane research.

Painful Experiments Don't Help Patients

Wayne State University subjects dogs to painful, deadly heart failure and hypertension experiments, which have gone on since 1991 **without yielding any scientific advancements**. The dogs endure multiple surgeries in which Wayne State 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.¹

The dogs 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.² **Wayne State may be the worst offender, but across Michigan, hundreds of dogs may be subjected to painful experiments.**³

Research Without Pain

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 non-harmful studies.**

How HB 4849 Addresses the Problem

HB 4849 would update existing Michigan Public Health Code language first enacted in 1978⁴ and would prohibit experiments that cause pain to dogs at public institutions. It would give oversight authority to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Myths and Facts About the Issue:

Myth: *Dogs are necessary to advance human health research.*

Fact: 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 the George Washington University uses diseased hearts from patients undergoing transplants or hearts donated for research to collect human-relevant data.⁵ **The experiments at Wayne State have been criticized by experts, including Dr. Michael Joyner of the Mayo Clinic,⁶ 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 2015.⁷

Myth: Dogs are necessary for the development and testing of pharmaceuticals.

Fact: In a July 2021 statement, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wrote: **“The FDA does not mandate that human drugs be studied in dogs.”**⁸ In addition, in 2022, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that many interpret to mean the FDA no longer must require the use of animals for preclinical drug testing.⁹ In addition, president and CEO of Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Mihael H. Polymeropoulos, MD, has said: **“There is no evidence that long-term studies on dogs add any predictive value to human safety.”**¹⁰



Myth: The use of animals in laboratories is already heavily regulated.

Fact: Under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), no experiments are prohibited—including those that inflict pain. The AWA is primarily a husbandry statute that regulates the size of cages, cleanliness, food and water, etc. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is supposed to enforce the AWA, was cited by its own inspector general for closing investigations involving animal deaths and serious repeat violations and for unnecessarily reducing fines by an average of 86%.¹¹ In February 2019, *The Washington Post* reported: “USDA inspectors documented 60 percent fewer violations at animal facilities in 2018 from the previous year. ... **The drop in citations is one illustration of a shift—or what critics call a gutting—in USDA’s oversight of animal industries.**”¹²

Myth: State legislatures leave the oversight of animal experiments to the federal government.

Fact: In recent years, several states have passed laws that prohibit certain types of experiments or increase oversight of facilities that use animals. In 2022, Virginia signed into law five bills that regulate the use and sale of dogs “for experimental purposes.”¹³ **The bills were prompted by the repeated, troubling negligence of a Virginia research facility that also bred and sold dogs for use in experiments (Wayne State was one of its customers).** Also in 2022, California passed a law that would prohibit the use of dogs in the testing of chemicals, toxic substances, and food additives.¹⁴ In 2018, Virginia outlawed the use of state funds for carrying out painful experiments on dogs.¹⁵ In 2023, legislation was introduced in Pennsylvania that would prohibit the use of public funds for painful experiments on dogs.¹⁶

Myth: The National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards grants only for important research.

Fact: When evaluating whether to continue to fund research, NIH relies heavily on the number of papers published by the researcher, not on an evaluation of whether that research has improved human health. A 2012 report in the journal *Nature* showed that the NIH repeatedly awards mediocrity rather than innovation.¹⁷ Speaking to Reuters about the report, a prominent scientist stated: **“It’s just amazing that most of NIH’s \$30 billion is going to scientists who haven’t had the greatest impact.”**¹⁸

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