



March 15, 2016

Delegate Peter A. Hammen
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
General Assembly of Maryland
241 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street,
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Hammen:

The National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the House Health and Government Operations Committee on House Bill 594.

NABR, and its more than 380 member institutions and their thousands of employees who engage in animal-related biomedical research, writes to express concerns with HB594. NABR members include universities, medical and veterinary schools, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies and other research-intensive programs, including many research institutions in the state of Maryland, that are dedicated to the development of diagnostics, treatments and cures for animals and humans. Biomedical research projects involving animals, governed by multiple laws, regulations and guidelines, continue to yield invaluable data in the development of new therapies to treat disease. Cancer therapies, vaccines, organ transplants, cardiovascular surgeries and medicines, and many other innovations have been developed through research conducted at our member institutions.

HB 594 is misguided and unnecessary. The adoption of research animals is not a new concept for biomedical research. Many research programs in the United States already conduct adoption programs. These animals have been purposely bred for research and are not typical house pets. They require specialized care and attention, beyond those of the common household pet, and every effort must be made to ensure proper acclimatization and evaluation before placing in post-research homes. The existing efforts organized by research programs for adoption include careful and strict guidelines for evaluating potential adoptive homes, something that private shelters or adoption organizations may not be equipped or trained to do. HB594 does not permit these important criteria to be analyzed when re-homing an animal nor does it specify who will decide if an animal is suitable for adoption.

Research discovery relies on scientific freedom and peer-reviewed research. The peer review process insures lab animals are housed and cared for under strict regulations. HB594 challenges this time-tested protocol by determining the duration of research studies to a maximum of two years. In fact, many research studies require longer than two years to complete. While on the face of it, HB594 appears benign, this legislation sets dangerous precedents affecting future life-saving research.

The Committee should be aware similar legislation to HB594 has been introduced in other states and is part of a campaign by animal rights activists opposed to all animal research. These activists use animals adopted from research programs as public relations props to highlight their false claims that animal research is cruel and unnecessary. The activists behind these efforts don't plan to stop their campaign with passage of legislation requiring dog and cat adoption, either. Now, activists are expressing interest that other research species, like rabbits, guinea pigs, goats, pigs and rats, be provided for adoption.

The state of Maryland should be justifiably proud of its venerable research institutions, including Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, and the dynamic and productive research discoveries they have made to improve the health of both humans and other animals. Legislative proposals like HB594 create an anti-research climate which may result in biomedical programs looking to other states as more supportive climates for their lifesaving research endeavors.

Finally, the provision in HB594 which requires private research facilities to adopt out their dogs and cats may unconstitutionally deprive research institutions of property without due process or just compensation as referenced by the Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution.

NABR appreciates and understands the importance of re-homing animals no longer needed in biomedical research and supports the already existing and effective framework practiced nationwide by our research institutions; therefore, NABR opposes HB594.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frankie L. Trull". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frankie L. Trull
President
NABR