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TESTIMONY

House Appropriations Committee

*HB 732 – Humane Adoption of Companion Animals Used in Research  
Act of 2018*

Tina Bjarekull, President

March 13, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of *House Bill 732- Humane Adoption of Companion Animals Used in Research Act of 2018* with amendments. Maryland's biomedical research and life sciences industry employs over 71,000 workers and expends almost \$2.7 billion annually. In fact, Maryland attracts more federal research dollars than any other state in the nation. This research has a profound impact on the advancement of medical knowledge and leads to pioneering discoveries that save lives, improve health, and relieve the suffering of humans as well as animals.

The development of medical science necessitates responsible and appropriate experiments on animal species. Given the public's dual interests in biomedical advancements and the welfare of animals, the federal government has adopted a comprehensive system of laws and regulations to control the humane use of animals in the laboratory. Research facilities must register with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and comply with federal animal welfare regulations and standards, such as housing, feeding, transportation, exercise, ventilation, sanitation, etc. All research animals must be under the supervision of a veterinarian or other scientist who has the training and expertise to properly care for and handle these animals. Research facilities must provide annual reports to USDA providing specific disclosures and verifying compliance with all federal laws and regulations governing the scientific, technical, and humane use and care of research animals. Records must be maintained and available to USDA staff during inspections.

House Bill 732 requires Maryland's medical research facilities to take steps to provide for the adoption of a dog or cat that is no longer needed for scientific research purposes by: 1) establishing a list of animal "rescue" organizations; 2) offering the dog or cat to an animal "rescue" organization; and 3) entering into a collaborative agreement with an animal "rescue"

organization. The federal Animal Welfare Act and other federal laws and regulations dictate appropriate adoption standards for retired research animals. Not all former research animals are appropriate candidates for adoption. Decisions about the adoption of research animals should be made by trained veterinarians and scientists in accordance with federal standards for the health and safety of the animals and the broader public.

In addition, House Bill 732 requires every research facility located in Maryland to provide certain disclosures to the State on dogs and cats owned by the research facility and released. This state-level reporting is not required by research facilities located in any other state in the nation, and the information is not something that Maryland requires to implement any existing state policy or regulation. Therefore, it could suggest to researchers and funders that Maryland is not supportive of the biomedical industry. Most important, MICUA is concerned that the release of this information could put organizations and individuals at risk from extremists who desire to halt all animal research activities. In recent years, extremists have become increasingly destructive and are targeting individual researchers, family members, and vendors who supply products and services to research facilities.

MICUA supports two amendments to address our concerns. The first amendment would allow research institutions to continue their established placement process for the adoption of cats and dogs. As currently drafted, HB 732 would force institutions to turn all adoptable animals over to animal rescue organizations rather than allowing direct adoptions. It is in the best interest of these animals to have decisions concerning their adoption remain the responsibility of the trained veterinarians accountable for their care. These veterinarians have developed relationships with the animals, are most familiar with their unique needs, and are best suited to make decisions regarding their safe placement.

The second amendment would eliminate the requirement to report research and adoption data to the Maryland Department of Agriculture. While legislation has passed in six states around the adoption of research cats and dogs, none of these laws have included state-reporting requirements. HB 732's state reporting and oversight would set Maryland apart from the rest of the country at a time when regulatory burdens have been identified as a significant hindrance on research by many research organizations, including the National Academies for Science, Engineering, and Medicine, as well as the federal government itself, both in the prior and current Administrations. HB 732, as introduced, would make Maryland the only state with a regulatory structure and reporting requirement.

**For the reasons stated above, MICUA requests a favorable report of House Bill 732 with the recommended amendments.**