

HB 5090 and SB 971: Saving Dogs and Modernizing Research

PhysiciansCommittee™
for Responsible Medicine



Heart disease is Michigan's biggest killer, and it has been for years. Yet Wayne State University continues to waste millions of taxpayer dollars on heart failure and hypertension experiments in which dogs are subjected to painful procedures and eventually killed. As a public institution, Wayne State has a responsibility to the people of Michigan, but the scientific futility of these experiments and the cruelty involved erode the public's trust. It is time for legislators in Lansing to take action and ensure that public resources are spent responsibly.

Records Reveal Troubling Trends

Thousands of pages of veterinary records and official protocols from Wayne State reveal:

- Up to 25 percent of dogs die during or after surgery—before the experiments are completed—because procedures are so invasive and dangerous. (All of the dogs who make it through the experiments are later killed.)
- Hundreds of dogs have been used and killed since 1991.
- Dogs are routinely used for “practice surgery” and then killed.

Wasted Taxpayer Money

Wayne State has spent **more than \$12 million** on these dog experiments. Despite those considerable public resources, the university has repeatedly made statements such as this: “The research is ongoing and it’s making good progress.” Yet Wayne State has produced no evidence of such progress, and after 28 years, taxpayers and patients expect results.

Michigan Deserves Better

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Michigan. By 2030, up to **2.9 million Michiganders** may have heart disease.

Public institutions should conduct research that benefits patients.

HB 5090 and SB 971 Would:

- Apply only to dogs used in public institutions
- Prohibit only experiments in which dogs are expected to experience pain and distress
- Not apply to the use of dogs in nonlethal clinical research or veterinary training for which the dog's guardian has consented

Myths and Facts About the Issue:

Myth: *Dogs are rarely used in laboratory experiments.*

Fact: At public institutions in Michigan, more than 700 dogs were used in invasive experiments between 2015 and 2018. While dogs may constitute a small portion of the animals used in laboratories, the public is exceedingly concerned about their welfare.

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

Fact: Cell-based and computer-based research methods and human-based studies render dogs unnecessary for human health research. For cardiovascular disease, the Framingham Heart Study is a prime example of human-relevant research. The study, conducted since 1948, has included thousands of people across the country and resulted in several major medical findings. In addition, 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.

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

Fact: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has no regulations requiring the use of dogs for drug development or testing. While some researchers may prefer to use dogs, there is no legal requirement.

Myth: *The use of animals in laboratories is 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 grave violations, including animal deaths and serious repeat violations; failing to properly apply financial penalties, reducing fines by an average of 86 percent; and wasting resources by conducting inspections at facilities that did not house animals covered by the AWA. 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.”

Myth: *The National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards grants only for scientifically 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 NIH repeatedly awards mediocrity rather than innovation. Speaking to *Reuters*, a prominent scientist responded: “It’s just amazing that most of NIH’s \$30 billion is going to scientists who haven’t had the greatest impact.”

Myth: *Scientists agree that dogs are important for research.*

Fact: Numerous scientists have criticized the dog studies conducted at Wayne State. Loring Rowell, PhD, professor emeritus at the University of Washington, wrote: “The overall problem of coping with the stress of prolonged exercise in humans [cannot] be appreciated from studies with these laboratory animals.” Mayo Clinic’s Michael Joyner, MD, has performed studies in humans similar to those conducted in dogs at Wayne State. Dr. Joyner has criticized the lead experimenter at Wayne State, writing that “using selective interpretation [he] dismisses the human data as either irrelevant or incomplete.”

Myth: *Dogs are necessary for the training of health care professionals.*

Fact: While dogs were once commonly used to train medical students and physicians, they are rarely used today. There are no known programs in Michigan using dogs to train health care professionals.