



April 18, 2019

The Hon. Laura Friedman
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0043

Dear Assemblymember Friedman,

We are writing to respectfully express our strong opposition to AB700. To help inform your deliberations on this issue, this letter includes information regarding animal use numbers at entities to which AB700 relates, and the large number of Animal Welfare Act violations that have occurred at these institutions in California in recent years.

Mississippi, Indiana, Louisiana

To offer a national context, if AB700 is enacted into law, California will have lowered its standards for transparency in biomedical research at educational institutions to the substandard level set by states such as Mississippi, Indiana, and Louisiana, who have passed similar laws to AB700. In many respects, AB700 is more extreme than the laws that passed in those states.

Animal Numbers at AB700-Relevant Entities

According to 2017¹ USDA data,² over 34,000 animals were housed in facilities that AB 700 would exempt from records disclosure. It is critical to note that this number excludes up to 90% of animals used in medical research at these institutions, as it counts only animals that receive protection under the federal Animal Welfare Act.

Example: Cats, Dogs, Primates

Cats: More than half (13/21) entities conducting invasive experiments on cats are postsecondary educational institutions. Nearly 1,500 (1,491) cats suffering in experiments in entities to which AB700 relates. Of these, 323 cats were used in “Category D” experiments, meaning experimenters admitted they intentionally caused animals to be in a state of pain and distress.

Dogs: Of the 38 entities conducting dog experiments in CA, 16 are postsecondary educational institutions. As of 2017, nearly 3,500 dogs suffered in experiments at university-affiliated entities in California. Of these, 578 dogs were used in “Category D” experiments.

Primates: The majority (11/18) entities conducting invasive experiments on primates are post-secondary institutions. As of 2017, nearly 5,000 (4,905) primates suffered in experiments in university-affiliated entities in California. Of these, 1,141 primates were used in “Category D” experiments.

¹ The last year for which data is available.

² APHIS Animal Care, *Annual Reports Search*, United States Dep’t of Ag. (2017), <https://acis.aphis.edc.usda.gov/ords/f?p=118:205:::> (last visited Apr. 12, 2019).

45 APHIS Violations Since 2015: Since 2015, USDA APHIS inspectors have documented 45 separate violations of the Animal Welfare Act at higher educational institutions in California. Examples include animals' limbs broken after escaping from enclosures, animals accidentally burned alive, and animals killed due to experimenter failure to follow protocols.

Taxpayer Funding: Public universities and colleges in California received more than \$2.4 billion in taxpayer funding for research activities in 2018, and it is estimated that half (50%) of these funds fund animal experiments. If taxpayers are funding up to \$1.2 billion in animal experiments at California universities, it's unfair for taxpayers to suddenly lose the ability to understand how these funds are spent.

AB700 Focuses On the Wrong Problem: The most significant problem regarding animal experimentation in California is not that public records are accessible, but that experimenters too often violate state and federal law with regard to animal welfare. To that end, the spirit and intent of this legislation is directly at odds with the most pressing need in this issue area; in our view, the sheer number of animals being used in AB700-relevant entities justifies an increase in transparency, not a decrease.

Current Law Is Providing Useful Insights: Giving journalists, concerned citizens, and animal welfare groups access to documents concerning medical research has proven to be a critical tool in revealing abuse, uncovering violations of law, and holding institutions accountable to prevent additional abuses from occurring.

Dangerous Precedent: The enactment of AB700 into law would be remembered as one of the greatest setbacks for animals suffering in laboratories in California's history as well as for supporters of transparency in government. AB700's passage may also open the floodgates for additional special interest groups who may lobby for their own unique exemptions under the California Public Records Act.

We hope you will consider working to ensure AB700, even as amended, does not proceed further in the legislative process. Thank you for your consideration, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you in drafting legislation that addresses the problem of animal abuse in California universities in the future, should that be of interest to you or your staff.

Sincerely,

New England Anti-Vivisection Society (Boston, MA)
In Defense of Animals (San Rafael, CA)
Advancing Law for Animals (Los Angeles, CA)
Mercy For Animals (Los Angeles, CA)
Progress For Science (Los Angeles, CA)
Kindred Spirits Care Farm (Winnetka, CA)
The Greenbaum Foundation (Los Angeles, CA)
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Los Angeles, CA)
Social Compassion in Legislation (Sacramento, CA)
Animal Alliance Network (Los Angeles, CA)