



February 7, 2024

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan  
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
2 Rego Ave.  
Bristol, RI 02809

The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi  
Speaker of the House  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
State House, Room 323  
82 Smith St.  
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Via e-mail: [HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov); [rep-donovan@rilegislature.gov](mailto:rep-donovan@rilegislature.gov); [rep-shekarchi@rilegislature.gov](mailto:rep-shekarchi@rilegislature.gov); [ldipetrillo@rilegislature.gov](mailto:ldipetrillo@rilegislature.gov)

Dear Chair Donovan and Speaker Shekarchi:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally and more than 22,693 supporters in Rhode Island—regarding H 7234. This bill, introduced by Reps. Serpa, Phillips, J. Brien, Solomon, Fellela, O'Brien, McEntee, Lima, and Costantino, would ensure the commonsense measure of prohibiting the use of animals for medical training if relevant animal-free methods are available and in use by at least one accredited medical training program in the state in the same medical discipline.<sup>1</sup> **Based on the information presented below, we urge you to approve H 7234, which we strongly support.**

This bill is consistent with the growing transition away from the use of live animals in medical training, “spurred, in part, by improvements in technological realism that accurately mimics human anatomy and physiology, financial burdens involved with running animal laboratories, heightened public awareness and ethical objections to the use of animals in experiments, and unique pedagogical advantages inherent in simulation-based training and assessment capabilities.”<sup>2</sup>

Conducting medical training on animals is not cost-effective, given the substantial financial costs associated with the animals' acquisition, caging, food,

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<sup>1</sup>State of Rhode Island. 2024 – H 7234.

<https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText24/HouseText24/H7234.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Pawlowski J, Feinstein D, Crandall ML, Gala S. Chapter 22: Modernizing biomedical training: Replacing live animal laboratories with human simulation. In *Animal Experimentation: Working Towards a Paradigm Change*. Brill; 2019:551–566. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391192\\_023](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391192_023)

veterinary care, and disposal.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the use of animals for human medical training has low applicability since humans have drastically different anatomy and physiology from that of other animals, who also lack patient-specific health variability.<sup>4</sup>

Researchers have shown that “[u]nlike animal-based laboratories, innovations in biomedical simulation technology ranging from high-fidelity human patient simulation (HPS) to computer-assisted learning (CAL) software and virtual reality programs have created important new cost-effective ways to accurately model human anatomy and physiology, create challenging immersive scenarios that mimic real-world medical cases, provide students with vital opportunities to repeat medical procedures until proficiency, improve provider confidence and transference of learned skills to clinical practice, and allow educators to receive real-time objective performance feedback.”<sup>5</sup>

It’s notable that 97% of emergency medicine (EM) residency training programs in the U.S. and Canada have replaced their use of live animals with more human-relevant models. By contrast, Brown University and the associated Rhode Island Hospital are part of the outlying 3% of EM training programs that still rely on the use of live animals.<sup>6</sup> These two Rhode Island institutions are out of sync with the larger trend away from the use of animals in EM residency training programs.

In 2023, after hearing from PETA scientists, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center<sup>7</sup> sent a letter to us stating that “the use of live animals in the surgical and emergency medical training programs at the [College of Medicine’s] Chattanooga campus is being suspended effective immediately” and that such use of live animals “will no longer be a necessary component of this training.”<sup>8</sup> In 2019, EM residency training programs at Baylor College of Medicine<sup>9</sup> and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester<sup>10</sup> ended their use of live animals. Furthermore, like Brown University, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester previously used live pigs to practice invasive airway procedures but now instead uses

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<sup>3</sup>Arjomandi Rad A, Hajzamani D, Sardari Nia P. Simulation-based training in cardiac surgery: A systematic review. *Interdiscip Cardiovasc Thorac Surg*. 2023;37(2):ivad079. doi:10.1093/icvts/ivad0

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>5</sup>Pawlowski JB, Feinstein DM, Gala S. Developments in the transition from animal use to simulation-based biomedical education. *Simul Healthc*. 2018;13(6):420–426.

<sup>6</sup>Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Survey of emergency medicine residencies. PCRM.org. Updated October 17, 2023. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.pcrm.org/ethical-science/ethical-education-and-training/survey-of-emergency-medicine-residencies>

<sup>7</sup>PETA. Victory! PETA persuades medical school to stop mutilating animals. PETA.org. Published April 13, 2023. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/action/action-alerts/tennessee-medical-school-pigs-deadly-training/>

<sup>8</sup>Peter Buckley, M.D., e-mail communication, April 12, 2023. Accessed February 6, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PETA-4.4.23-4876-1791-1643-003.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>Baylor College of Medicine eliminates live animal use in emergency medicine residency. Published March 27, 2019. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.pcrm.org/news/news-releases/baylor-college-medicine-eliminates-live-animal-use-emergency-medicine-residency>

<sup>10</sup>Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Mayo Clinic ends animal use for resident training. Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. PCRM.org. Published July 5, 2019. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.pcrm.org/news/news-releases/mayo-clinic-ends-animal-use-resident-training>

non-animal models.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill<sup>12</sup> and the University of South Carolina<sup>13</sup> adopted policies to stop using live animals for training EM physician residents.

Progress in replacing animal use spans medical training disciplines. After discussions with PETA, Henry Ford Hospital's obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) physician residency training program updated its public policy on that program's webpage, which now states, "The OB/GYN residency program at Henry Ford Hospital does not use animals for training purposes, and instead uses advanced human patient simulators and other non-animal methods."<sup>14</sup> Also, after hearing from PETA, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center said that it no longer uses live animals for OB/GYN residency training<sup>15</sup>—it previously used at least 13 live pigs for teaching laparoscopic hysterectomies, retroperitoneal dissection, and tissue morcellation.<sup>16</sup>

Medical training programs can benefit from decades of advances in simulation technology that are widely available, pedagogically valuable, financially prudent, and ethically responsible. For the sake of animals, physicians, and patients, we ask you to approve H 7234.

You can contact me at [DMand@peta.org](mailto:DMand@peta.org). Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Donya Mand, M.D.  
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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>12</sup>Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. University of North Carolina ends use of live animals for emergency medicine training. PCRM.org. Published February 3, 2018. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.pcrm.org/news/news-releases/university-north-carolina-ends-use-live-animals-emergency-medicine-training>

<sup>13</sup>Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. University of South Carolina emergency medicine program ends live animal use. PCRM.org. Published September 21, 2016. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.pcrm.org/news/news-releases/university-south-carolina-emergency-medicine-program-ends-live-animal-use>

<sup>14</sup>Henry Ford Health. Obstetrics & gynecology residency. Accessed January 12, 2024. <https://www.henryford.com/hcp/med-ed/residencies-fellowships/hfh/ob-gyn>

<sup>15</sup>UT Southwestern Medical Center. Responsive records: Texas Public Information Act request received August 2, 2023—K. Flaughner #2. August 15, 2023. Accessed January 12, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2023-08-15-no-live-animals-used.pdf>

<sup>16</sup>UT Southwestern Medical Center. responsive records: Texas Public Information Act request received November 16, 2022. December 14, 2022. Accessed February 6, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2022-12-14-responsive-records-ut-southwestern.pdf>