

March 29, 2019

The Honorable Brian Maienschein
State Capitol, Room 4208
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for the California Transparency in Research Act

Dear Assemblymember Maienschein:

I am writing in support for the California Transparency in Research Act, A.B. 889.

The public has become increasingly concerned about the use of animals in experiments. Yet, despite the billions of dollars in federal funding directed to animal research and the fact that much of that research occurs at public institutions, Americans have little to no idea how many animals are used in laboratories. In February 2017, this became even truer when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) shut down its online animal welfare database without warning. While the database was partially restored, the incident highlighted the need for greater transparency.

While some laboratory animal use is reported to the USDA, those figures are just the tip of the iceberg as more than 90 percent of animals used in labs are statutorily excluded from the federal Animal Welfare Act. Likewise, numbers of animals reported to the National Institutes of Health are “approximate” and “average” according to the agency’s own forms, and those figures are only accessible to the public through cumbersome and time-consuming Freedom of Information Act requests.

In contrast, California’s Laboratory Animal Use Approval Program has been collecting information on warm-blooded animals at many research facilities for almost 70 years. We believe it is time to expand that program to cover all laboratories using animals for research, testing and the training of scientists and healthcare professionals. In this way, California can be a national leader on this issue.

Thank you for introducing this important initiative, and I urge your colleagues in the legislature to vote ‘aye’ on AB 889.

Very truly,