

February 8, 2024

House Bill 7234 – Support
House Health and Human Services Committee

Katherine Williams, M.D.
75 River Farm Drive
East Greenwich, R.I.

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Mr. Chairman and Committee members, thank you for your time today. My name is Dr. Katherine Williams and I'm a board certified family physician. I graduated from Brown Family Medicine residency program in 2000, and since then I have stayed in the wonderful state of Rhode Island. I am currently the medical director of a non-profit urgent care serving a medically underserved community.

My first animal rights protest was at the University of Pennsylvania in 1995 where I was a medical student at the time. The medical school was using dogs to teach surgical procedures to the medical students, so many of us protested. There was the usual debate with some of the leadership claiming the dogs were a necessary part of our education, with others saying there are better and newer options. I actually googled the incident last night and found an article from the Daily Pennsylvanian from May of 1995. It reported that the "newer" options were "computer simulators and videotapes of the experiments". This made me laugh, because I can guess the computer simulators from 1995 were perhaps not the greatest, especially when they were also proposing to watch a videotape. Well, luckily the University discontinued the dog lab that year for the medical students, which was a small win at the time. Unfortunately it was not the end of animal experiments at the University, but it was a step in the right direction in terms of modernizing medical training.

Imagine my surprise, over 20 years later, to learn that the Brown Emergency residency program is using pigs to train their residents. I was really shocked, given that modern artificial simulators are widely used across the country to train emergency residents the exact same procedures. As you have heard from my colleagues, these newer simulators raise cortisol levels, mimicking the natural stress reaction that would occur with a live animal or a human being. They also have similar outcomes in terms of the confidence of the trainee after the training.

You will also hear from smart Emergency medicine physicians that they learned using animals, and they feel that the way they learned using an animal is better. I respect my colleagues, however I challenge their assertion. We need to look at the thousands of similarly smart and well trained Emergency physicians that learned the same

procedure using an artificial simulator model instead of animals. These same physicians are saving lives performing the same procedure across the country.

I know it's hard for them to imagine a different training path, but we need to accept change and progress, especially when it comes to preventing useless suffering. Using animals to practice procedures is antiquated, and this practice needs to stop.

I ask you to support Senate bill 7234.

Thank you for your time.