

February 8, 2024

RE: Support for H 7234

Margaret B. Peppercorn, MD, FAAP
69 Seaconnet Blvd.
Portsmouth, R.I.

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the Committee:

I am a Harvard Medical School graduate who was in private practice for over 30 years in Massachusetts and now has a home in Rhode Island. I very strongly support H 7234. I am writing because I am unable to attend in person.

When I was in medical school, we had to do dissections, surgeries, and physiology experiments on living dogs who were later euthanized. I still have nightmares from those experiences and deep regrets over having ever done them. This was in the late 1960s when there were probably few alternatives, but since that time many alternative methods have been created and perfected and are now being used across the world to train medical students and physicians every bit as well, if not better, and without harming any living creature. In fact, the vast majority of training programs across the U.S. and Canada now use these nonanimal modalities.

We obviously want to train our physicians the best way possible, but since that can now be done with simulators, which much more closely mimic human anatomy than any animal model could and which are also certainly much more humane, I see no justification for using and harming living animals the ways we did decades ago. H 7234 therefore makes perfect sense to me. So many other universities and hospitals have proven to be able to provide excellent training without using living animals. There is clearly no rational reason why the joint Brown-Rhode Island Hospital program should not follow their lead.

Using living animals is not only an inferior teaching method but is also inhumane. It not only harms the animals but harms the trainees as well since it instills a callousness by forcing them to disregard the harm they are doing to the animal they are working on. After all, every trainee knows that the animals die during or after the exercise. I managed to make it through my experiences and maintain a sensitivity for the suffering of animals, but many physicians I know did not.

I therefore very strongly urge you to support H 7234, which would eliminate the practice of allowing such unnecessary cruelty to continue and would produce more compassionate healthcare providers.

Very truly,

Margaret B. Peppercorn, MD, FAAP