

Scott H Pasichow MD MPH FACEP FAEMS
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
185 S Orange Ave
Newark, NJ 07103

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The Honorable Susan Donovan, Chair
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Welfare
Room 135
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Oppose HB7234

To Chairwoman Donovan and members of the House Committee on Health and Welfare:

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about this important issue. My name is Scott Pasichow, and I am an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark New Jersey, and a graduate of the Emergency Medical Services Fellowship and Emergency Medicine Residency at Brown University. I am writing in opposition to HB-7234, a bill that seeks to criminalize a crucial part of my emergency medicine training. An important part of understanding this bill is to understand why animals are used in medical education at all, and how this use uniquely prepared me for the work I do today.

I participated in the live animal airway training, and learned how to effectively perform a surgical airway. Months after this training, my skills were tested when an injured patient was brought to the ED. He was unconscious and unable to protect his airway due to facial and head trauma. After multiple attempts at intubation, and with his oxygen levels decreasing to dangerously low levels, I cut the patient's neck, inserted a tube, and saved his life. A week after nearly dying from an assault, he walked out of the hospital and went home.

The stress of that moment left a lasting impression on me, and I have relived it thousands of times since. Unlike many of the procedures cited by opponents to use of live animal models, emergency surgical airways are stressful and rare procedures, one that many in our profession will never perform on an actual patient. It is one of the few procedures that cannot adequately be learned through the traditional apprenticeship model of "see one, do one, teach one." Further, no simulation model to date can mimic the anatomy, skin turgor, blood loss, air movement, and the physiological response of the provider performing the procedure, facts which multiple studies to date support. This is the reason I chose to participate in this training, and part of the reason that myself and many of my colleagues come to Brown to train in Emergency Medicine.

I am a parent to 2 rescue pit-bulls, and, with my wife, have provided rehabilitation to wild

animals including rabbits, squirrels, racoons, and opossums. I love animals, and would never participate in any practice that caused suffering. The dedicated care these animals receive in this lab is designed to minimize pain or suffering. To ensure this, the animal lab at Brown is overseen by local and national review boards, and regularly reviewed to ensure that 1) no adequate alternative models exist in the simulation world, and 2) that the animals are cared for throughout the training. This oversight exists because of federal laws and regulation that has existed for the past 54 years under the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, regulations that supersede this bill and make it unnecessary.

This bill supposes that because another training program in the state does not offer this training, that none should not be allowed to. This assumes that efficacy is the only reason that this choice is made, and that factors such as oversight, cost, and provider and animal safety were not the primary motivators in choosing a different form of training on this or any procedure. Even when the American College of Surgeons stopped requiring live animal training as part of their Advanced Trauma Life Support Course, cost and access, **not simulation's superiority**, were cited as reasons for this practice to end.¹

This bill seeks to solve a problem that does not exist, and does so in a manner that would be harmful to physicians trained in this state, and to the citizens who rely on our excellent training. As a father of two beautiful children, I want to know that if my son or daughter were ever to need lifesaving care, that the best training possible was afforded to their doctors. I urge you to not hamper a system that is protecting patients, and treating animals with fairness, dignity, and respect. Please vote no on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Pasichow', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott H Pasichow, MD MPH FACEP FAEMS
Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

References:

1 Henry S, Brasel KJ, Joseph K. "ATLS at 40: Distinguished past, bright future." *Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons*. 1 March 2018. Online.
<http://www.facsbulletin.com/acsbulletin/march2018/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1346765#articleId1346765>. Accessed 25 February 2019.