



September 29, 2005

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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American Medical Colleges**
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Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.
President

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

I write on behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to express our opposition to amendment SA 1729 to H.R. 2744, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2006. This amendment would prohibit funding to biomedical research facilities that lawfully purchase animals from Class B dealers as designated under the Animal Welfare Act. The language in this amendment would do little to protect pets but would have serious negative implications for life-saving biomedical research. Specifically, any research facility that uses a Class B animal dealer could no longer receive funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under this provision. Veterinary and medical instruction would be seriously hindered by a lack of availability of animals from Class B dealers. The AAMC represents all 125 accredited U.S. allopathic medical schools; approximately 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems; 96 professional and academic societies; and the nation's medical students and residents.

The amendment is based on the false assumption that dogs and cats are routinely stolen and sold to research facilities. Class B dealers, who are licensed and regulated by the USDA, acquire animals from pounds and shelters, pet owners who wish to give up their ownership, and other credible sources. In its most recent report, USDA stated that 96 percent of audited animal acquisition records in FY 2001 have been successfully traced to their original source. In addition, final rules published in the Federal Register on July 14, 2004, by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of USDA add additional protections to insure that pets do not inadvertently end up in research facilities.

Research facilities should not be prohibited from utilizing law-abiding Class B dealers to legally acquire stray and unwanted animals that may otherwise be put to death. The sources of all non-purpose bred dogs and cats needed for research are already strictly regulated under existing USDA animal welfare rules. Research facilities and animal dealers must keep detailed records

verifying the original source of dogs and cats, certifying that mandatory holding periods were followed and documenting that providers were informed the animals may be used for research.

While most animals involved in research are purpose-bred animals, certain types of studies require animals that are not available from breeders or Class A dealers. Many studies require a diversified gene pool that can only be provided by Class B dealers. Such studies include: vaccine, drug and other research for pets; orthopedic studies; cardiovascular studies; prostate cancer research, and research into “orphan” genetic diseases, among others. This amendment would seriously harm important biomedical research conducted at our member institutions. I respectfully request that you object to SA 1729 during conference negotiations of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2006. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan J. Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.