September 30, 2024

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
U.S. Senate
Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, Chair Reed, and Ranking Member Wicker,

On behalf of the 16 undersigned organizations representing biomedical professional societies and nonprofits, veterinary medicine groups, and academic institutions, we are writing to offer comments on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 (H.R. 8070).[1] As the bill proceeds through the negotiations process, we urge Congress to strike House Section 229, "Prohibition on Availability of Funds For Canine and Feline Research." If implemented, this language will limit the ability of academic and veterinary institutions to conduct life-saving biomedical research and weaken the Department of Defense's (DOD) capabilities to safeguard U.S. national security and maintain biomedical progress.

The DOD animal research program—including partnerships with veterinary schools and teaching institutions—has led to significant advancements in human and animal health that have greatly benefited U.S. troops, veterans, and military working dogs. These include improved therapies for infectious diseases, enhanced surgical techniques for wounded soldiers, new treatments for exposure to hazardous agents, and more effective preventative measures for animal diseases. All animal studies conducted through DOD are carefully regulated by federal laws, regulations, and guidelines to uphold the highest animal welfare standards.[2]

Although new approach methods such as organ chips and computer models show promise, these methods are only useful for specific applications and often require confirmation studies in whole-body species, such as dogs and cats, to fully understand complex biological processes. For example, to minimize blood loss due to battlefield injuries, the DOD's Veterinary Pathology Residency Program and Center uses animals to study how to decrease the period between injury and treatment. Furthermore, canine pathology studies that examine and genetically identify cancerous tumors benefit animals beyond the military,

[1] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025. H.R. 8070. 118th Congress. (2024). https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/8070
[2] Use of Animals in DoD Conducted and Supported Research and Training. DoDI 3216.01. (2019). https://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/dodi/

including U.S. Capitol Police, Border Protection, and Secret Service dogs.[3] As the only one of its kind in the DOD, research through this residency program enables cats, dogs, and our dedicated service members to live longer, healthier lives.

Therefore, without support for this research, the U.S. loses opportunities to provide life-saving medicine to patients while weakening our nation's military and biomedical preparedness for emerging threats. Furthermore, by preventing institutions from conducting this work, researchers and veterinarians may relocate their research to other countries that heavily invest in biomedical research. Not only would this pose a substantial setback for U.S. scientific competitiveness, but it could also adversely affect animal welfare, as foreign laws lack the same level of oversight and rigor as those in the U.S.

Taken together, Section 229 would have a profound negative impact on the DOD's research and military readiness. We appreciate Congress' bipartisan efforts to address scientific objectives within the DOD and strongly urge you to omit House Section 229 in the final FY25 NDAA agreement.

Sincerely,

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)
American Brain Coalition (ABC)
Americans for Medical Progress (AMP)
American Physiological Society (APS)
American Psychological Association Services
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET)
American Thoracic Society (ATS)
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
Association of American Universities (AAU)
Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI)
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU)
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA)
National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF)
American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP)
Society for Neuroscience (SfN)

[3] Where Animal and Human Health Research Coincide. U.S. Department of Defense. (2019). https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1777388/