

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 11, 2024

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

We write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) review and evaluate policies and practices related to taxpayer-funded research, experimentation, and testing on dogs and cats. Since at least 1980, the GAO has been providing analyses and information to Congress regarding how to improve federal agencies' efforts to minimize the use of animals in these activities.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, these studies show a lack of disclosure regarding federally-funded animal research and efforts to reduce animal use in the U.S. and in foreign countries which continues today.<sup>2,3,4,5,6</sup>

A common theme that has emerged in recent bipartisan Congressional oversight efforts is that there is a lack of basic transparency about animal use and spending related to research funded by federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and others.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Despite repeated requests from Congress, we still do not know how many dogs and cats are being used in federally-funded research, what they are used for, how much it costs taxpayers, and what our return on investment is. This is bad for taxpayers and animals.

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U.S. Government Accountability Office. Proposed Legislation for Federal Funding To Develop Nonanimal Alternatives for Research. HRD-80-69, 1980, <https://www.gao.gov/products/hrd-80-69>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *DOD Animal Research: Improvements Needed in Quality of Biomedical Research Database*. NSIAD/HEHS-99-24, 1998, <https://www.gao.gov/products/nsiadhehs-99-24>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Animal Use in Federal Research: Agencies Share Information, but Reporting and Data Quality Could Be Strengthened*. GAO-18-459, 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-459>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Animal Use in Research: Federal Agencies Should Assess and Report on Their Efforts to Develop and Promote Alternatives*. GAO-19-629, 2019, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-629>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Animal Use in Research: NIH Should Strengthen Oversight of Projects It Funds at Foreign Facilities*. GAO-23-105736, 2023, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105736>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Federal Research: NIH Could Take Additional Actions to Manage Risks Involving Foreign Subrecipients*. GAO-23-106119, 2023, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106119>.

<sup>7</sup> White Coat Waste Project. "Lawmakers Probe USDA-Funded Cat and Dog Labs Following White Coat Waste Investigations." *White Coat Waste Project Blog*, 23 May 2024, <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2024/05/23/lawmakers-probe-usda-funded-cat-and-dog-labs-following-white-coat-waste-investigations/>.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, Young. "Rep. Young Kim Leads Bipartisan Push for Details on DOD Dog and Cat Experimentation." *Congresswoman Young Kim*, 29 July 2024, <https://youngkim.house.gov/2024/07/29/rep-young-kim-leads-bipartisan-push-for-details-on-dod-dog-and-cat-experimentation/>.

<sup>9</sup> Steube, Greg. "Steube, Titus Lead 21 Colleagues in Bipartisan Letter to NIH Demanding Accountability for Cruel Testing on Dogs and Cats." *Congressman Greg Steube*, 7 Sept. 2023, <https://steube.house.gov/press-releases/steube-titus-lead-21-colleagues-in-bipartisan-letter-to-nih-demanding-accountability-for-cruel-testing-on-dogs-and-cats/>.

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While some agencies, like the Department of Veterans Affairs, have launched dedicated efforts to eliminate testing on dogs and cats and improve transparency about their animal research, most agencies have not.<sup>10</sup>

Underscoring the need for better oversight of federally-funded animal research, the National Academies and federal agencies have repeatedly determined that unnecessary testing on dogs and cats has been approved and funded with millions of taxpayer dollars.<sup>11,12,13,14</sup> These wasteful programs were only acknowledged and ended after scrutiny from Congress and watchdog organizations.

**In the interest of improving transparency about government operations, combatting wasteful spending, and eliminating unnecessary federally-funded animal research, we ask that GAO conduct an evaluation and complete a report that addresses the following topics and questions about dog and cat research specifically and makes relevant recommendations for reforms:**

## Federally-funded dog and cat research

- What federal agencies are currently conducting or funding experiments on dogs and/or cats?
- How many dogs and cats are used in federally-funded research each year? How many were used in each pain category?
- How much taxpayer funding is spent annually on dog and cat research by each federal agency in the U.S. and abroad?
- For what purposes are dogs and cats being used in federally-funded research?
- Where are dogs and cats used in federally-funded research being obtained?

## Programs to reduce unnecessary federally-funded dog and cat research

- What policies or programs, if any, does each agency have in place to reduce and replace the use of dogs and cats in research?
- What are current agency policies and practices regarding the retirement and adoption of cats and dogs no longer needed in research?

## Research transparency

- What mechanisms exist, if any, at individual agencies and government-wide to collect and publicly report data on dog and cat use in federally-funded research, including details about the location, number of animals used, pain categories, cost, research goals, animal use justification, and outcomes?

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. "Current VA Research on Animals." *Office of Research & Development*, [https://www.research.va.gov/programs/animal\\_research/current\\_research.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/programs/animal_research/current_research.cfm).

<sup>11</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. *Necessity, Use, and Care of Laboratory Dogs at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25772>.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, Scott. "Cat experiments stopped at US Department of Veterans Affairs." 7News WJLA, 8 Aug. 2024, <https://wjla.com/features/i-team/va-cat-experiments-us-department-of-veterans-affairs-white-coat-waste-project-investigation-nih-dogs-animals-congress>.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, Scott. "Deadly kitten experiments funded by NIH at UC-Davis halted after White Coat inquiry." 7News WJLA, 31 May 2024, <https://www.wjla.com/features/i-team/national-institute-of-health-nih-maryland-lab-research-cats-toxoplasmosis-disease-kitten-experiments-funded-research-university-of-california-davis-uc-professor-dr-jeroen-saeji-white-coat-waste-project-peta>.

<sup>14</sup> Bedard, Paul. "Fauci Cancels \$1.8 Million Drug Testing on Beagle Puppies." *Washington Examiner*, 5 Oct. 2022, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/washington-secrets/428087/fauci-cancels-1-8-million-drug-testing-on-beagle-puppies>.

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- Do government websites like NIH RePORTER and USASpending accurately and consistently identify and describe federally-funded research using cats and dogs?

Thank you for your attention to this request. We anxiously await your response.

Sincerely,



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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



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Nicole Malliotakis  
Member of Congress



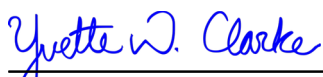
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



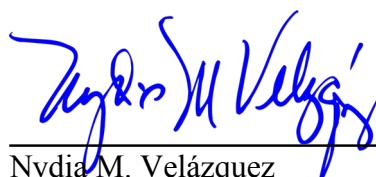
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



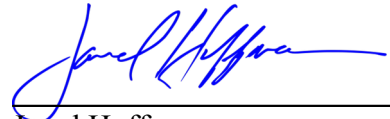
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Michael V. Lawler  
Member of Congress



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Donald G. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress