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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

In December, the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act was signed into law and included our bipartisan language cutting funding for the Pentagon's most painful (USDA pain categories D and E) research on dogs and cats.¹

Given this major development to end cruel and unnecessary taxpayer-funded testing on animals widely considered by Americans to be pets and family members, we are writing to inquire about the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) progress to 'phase out' funding for harmful research on cats and dogs, which it said it was committed to last July.²

We appreciate your leadership on reducing animal testing and your agency's decision to close the NIH's last intramural dog research laboratory last year.³ At the same time, we are concerned by NIH grant records obtained by the non-profit watchdog White Coat Waste and associated press reports which indicate the NIH awarded millions in funding to new research projects involving painful and deadly experiments on dogs and cats in the U.S. and in foreign countries throughout fiscal year 2025.^{4,5,6}

¹ Dinan, Stephen. "Congress Orders Defense Department to Stop Painful Experiments on Dogs and Cats." *The Washington Times*, 18 Dec. 2025, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2025/dec/18/congress-orders-defense-department-stop-painful-experiments-dogs-cats/>

² O'Keefe, Ross. "NIH to Phase Out Dog and Cat Testing Days after Republican Complaints." *Washington Examiner*, 11 July 2025, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/healthcare/3468762/nih-phase-out-dog-and-cat-testing/>

³ Taylor, Scott. "NIH Planned to Keep Testing on Beagles through 2026 before Halting Experiments." *WJLA ABC7*, 5 June 2025, <https://wjla.com/features/i-team/nih-animal-experimentation-tests-dogs-beagles-national-institutes-of-health-bethesda-maryland-facility-hhs-us-department-of-health-and-human-services-navy-cats-white-coat-waste-project>

⁴ Colley, Claire. "NIH under Fire for Funding Dog Tests Despite Vow to Cut Animal Research." *The Guardian*, 16 July 2025, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/16/nih-animal-testing-dogs-cats

⁵ Colley, Claire. "NIH funds new cat experiments despite pledge to phase them out, watchdog reports." *The Guardian*, 3 Dec. 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/dec/03/nih-funds-cat-experiments>

⁶ White Coat Waste. "Despite promises, feds still funding sick and unnecessary beagle testing." *Washington City Paper*, <https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/771796/despite-promises-feds-still-funding-sick-and-unnecessary-beagle-testing/>

Additionally, the NIH has continued to extend financial support for existing dog and cat research despite apparently having the authority to discontinue the funding.^{7,8,9}

We were troubled to learn throughout the last year, and as recently as January 2026, NIH renewed funding for grants which involve inducing strokes in puppies and kittens, breeding dogs to suffer from blindness and bleeding disorders, and other abusive experiments.

By February 20, 2026, we respectfully request a detailed update on all steps the NIH has taken to phase out funding for dog and cat research since NIH leadership committed to doing so in July 2025. If it has not already done so, we also request NIH adopt a policy prohibiting new and existing projects from using NIH funds to support harmful dog and cat research.

Our bipartisan work has led to the elimination of funding for cruel and outdated dog and cat research at the Department of Veterans Affairs and, most recently, the Department of War.

As the world's single largest funder of biomedical research, the NIH should institute similar reforms to modernize research, save countless dogs and cats from unnecessary harm at taxpayers' expense, and set an example other public and private funders will follow.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Nancy Mace
Member of Congress

⁷ National Institutes of Health. "5.3 Funding." NIH Grants Policy Statement, https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps/HTML5/section_5/5.3_funding.htm

⁸ "NIH Sends \$826K More to Fund Cruel Puppy Experiments at UPenn—Take Action!" World Animal News, 26 Jan. 2026, <https://worldanimalnews.com/2026/01/26/wan-exclusive-nih-sends-826k-more-to-cruel-puppy-experiments-at-upenn-take-action/>

⁹ "Models for Therapy of Hereditary Retinal Degeneration." NIH RePORTER, National Institutes of Health, Project Number 11251942, <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/HLiC5jiKekO35bG4lq8lJA/project-details/11251942>