

SUPPORT: S. 534, H. 764, H. 758

An Act protecting research animals

Sponsors: Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Carolyn Dykema, and Representative Michelle DuBois

Status: Referred to Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture

Summary: This bill would simply require that dogs and cats no longer needed for research purposes at research institutions or product testing facilities, be offered for adoption with non-profit animal shelter or rescue organizations or through private placement, once the research ends, if humane euthanasia is not mandated. This provides an opportunity for dogs and cats to live a life in a home as an adopted pet once their time in the research laboratory has come to an end – an opportunity that each of these dogs and cats deserve.



- **Current law:** Federal law regulates the care and use of research animals while they are in the laboratory, but does not offer any protection to the animal once the research project ends, except regarding humane euthanasia. This legislation addresses the deficiency by facilitating an open relationship between laboratories and non-profit animal adoption organizations and by codifying the option for private placement of retired research dogs and cats where research facilities have established programs.
- **Proven model for success:** There are a number of research facilities across the country that have instituted successful adoption programs for dogs and cats. Additionally, California, Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, Delaware, Illinois and Rhode Island have already passed similar legislation – providing an opportunity for dogs and cats to live a life in a home as an adopted pet, once their time in the laboratory has come to an end. People who have adopted former research dogs and cats attest to the resilience and affection of these animals, once they are given the chance to flourish in a home environment.
- **Flexibility and discretion re adoption:** The legislation is drafted so that research facilities are not forced to give to any animals to specific groups. It would simply require that, once an institution makes the determination that a dog or cat is no longer needed for research – then the research facility reach out to an animal shelter or rescue to ascertain whether they can assist with placement in an adoptive home or utilize the option for private placement.
- **Expertise in behavior training:** Shelters and rescue organizations work with animals with behavioral problems regularly and have experience and knowledge to place animals in suitable homes. Nonetheless, this legislation does not require a shelter or rescue organizations to take the animals offered by facilities and could decline to do so.
- **Does NOT impact the conduct of research:** This legislation does not impact the research itself; it simply offers these animals the chance to live out whatever time they have left in an adoptive home. Since discretion regarding when to retire and offer animals for adoption remains entirely with the research facilities, there are no concerns of regulatory burdens.
- **Companion animals deserve the opportunity to live in a home:** By formalizing the practice of adoption for research animals, this legislation benefits dogs and cats that make or will make contributions to scientific development in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.