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May 15, 1989

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 873

As a physician and resident of Pennsylvania, I would like to add my support to HB 873, a bill to regulate animal research.

HB 873 will allow the state to assume a regulatory role in which the federal government has failed. Current laboratory animal care laws are minimal and poorly enforced. The Animal Welfare Act exempts from protection most animals used for experimental purposes (rats, mice, birds, horses, and other farm animals), and the Department of Agriculture's inspection system is underfunded and understaffed. Gross violations of animal care codes have led to broad shutdowns of animal laboratories at a number of institutions, including a head injury laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania. HB 873 gives the state the authority to monitor the laboratories in Pennsylvania, and it will be a strong force in preventing future abusive and embarrassing incidences.

With regard to cosmetic testing on animals, a wide variety of in vitro alternatives are available. These alternatives have proven to be as accurate, if not more accurate, than the animal tests. Animal tests do not keep unsafe products off the market, nor are they of use to physicians in treating patients who have been accidentally exposed to harmful products. Eliminating these tests would spare millions of animals senseless pain and suffering.

Lastly, California and Florida have passed laws that guarantee a student's right not to participate in an experiment or training exercise using animals. The right of Pennsylvania students to exercise their religious or moral convictions must also be guaranteed by law.

I urge the members of the Judiciary Committee to pass this humane and responsible legislation.

Sincerely,

  
C. Thomas McChesney, Jr., M.D.