

September 28, 2022

Gary H. Gibbons, M.D.
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Office of the Director
Building 31, Room 5A52
31 Center Drive MSC 2486
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Gibbons:

Thank you in advance for your time and attention. We are writing with urgent concerns and questions about the use of dogs in cruel and deadly experiments funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). We were deeply troubled to learn that for decades NHLBI has been using taxpayer dollars to fund a colony of dogs bred to suffer from bleeding disorders, and to finance deadly experiments on these dogs.

Since 1947, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has maintained and grown a taxpayer-funded colony of dogs with hemophilia and related disorders. Through documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by nonprofit organization White Coat Waste Project, the cruelty and inhumane nature with which these dogs are treated has recently come to light. These records show that at least “120 to 150 dogs” in the colony are characterized as “severe bleeders.”^[1] Troubling records note that a “‘walking blood bank’ of resident normal canine donors”^[2] is needed in order to keep the already-fragile dogs from death. Without a ready supply of donor blood, “hemorrhages are usually debilitating or fatal.”^[3]

Documents reveal that many dogs in the colony “exhibit hemorrhages of the legs, chest, face and head, hips, and along the neck and back.”^[4] We are especially disturbed to find that UNC researchers have recorded an exorbitant death toll of newborn puppies, where their condition often leads to fatal injuries after birth or when their mother moves the puppies by their neck. Sadly — and unsurprisingly — dogs are killed upon the conclusion of the experiments, with UNC noting that “necropsy will be performed on dogs, experimental or control, after completion of the planned experiment.”^[6]

According to an April 2021 report submitted to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by UNC, 114 of these dogs were used in experiments “largely supported by the NIH/NHLBI” in 2020.^[5] UNC’s bleeding dog colony has been continuously funded by taxpayers for the past 75

^[1] Documents received under FOIA, case #55877 (hereafter “FOIA”), page 18

^[2] FOIA, page 18

^[3] FOIA, page 2

^[4] FOIA, page 18

^[6] FOIA, page 21

^[5] FOIA, page 59

years and has cost taxpayers over \$20 million since 1999.^[7] The current NHLBI contract that funds these cruel experiments is slated to run until September 2025.

Accordingly, we write with the following questions:

- 1) How much money has UNC's dog colony cost taxpayers since 1947?
- 2) How much money has NHLBI spent to fund experiments on dogs from the UNC colony since 2019? List all relevant projects and their cost.
- 3) How many dogs with bleeding disorders are currently housed at UNC?
- 4) How many dogs from this colony have been used and killed in experiments each year since 1947?
- 5) How many dogs have died (due to illness or accidents rather than experiment-related euthanasia) there in the past 10 years?
- 6) As computer modeling, organs-on-a-chip, and other technologies have become available, what efforts have been made to reduce the number of dogs bred and used in this facility in favor of alternatives?
- 7) Are the normal blood donor dogs adopted out when they're no longer needed or are they killed?
- 8) What efforts are being made to divest in animal experiments and move towards humane experiments that do not cause harm in animals?

As U.S. Representatives, we must exercise our oversight authority to ensure that Americans' tax dollars are well-spent, and scrutiny of this disturbing program is long overdue. We have made remarkable progress in recent years to reduce taxpayer-funded dog experiments, including at the Department of Veterans Affairs. As we continue to advance these efforts, we greatly appreciate your timely attention to these matters and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress

^[7] <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/a1hRXtO8n0G1PNGLxRB24A/project-details/8551940#history> and https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_IDV_75N92019D00041_7529