



60TH DISTRICT  
STATE CAPITOL  
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MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**JOSEPH A. ARAGONA**

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

February 5, 2026

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

The Honorable Jay Bhattacharya, MD, PhD  
Director, National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Sent via email ([stefanie.spear@hhs.gov](mailto:stefanie.spear@hhs.gov) and [ayanna.mcmanus@nih.gov](mailto:ayanna.mcmanus@nih.gov))

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Director Bhattacharya:

We are grateful that you are taking a critical look at wasteful government spending on unproductive animal experiments. In light of this, we are asking for your help with an HHS-funded dog experiment here in Michigan.

Since 1991, the NIH has funneled money to Wayne State University in Detroit to study human heart failure and hypertension by trying to artificially create those conditions in dogs. Not surprisingly, the experiment has failed to help any patients. Instead, the nearly \$15 million in spending under NIH project #HL055473 has only resulted in harming and killing hundreds of dogs over the last 34 years.

Thousands of pages of public records obtained from Wayne State by the nonprofit Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine reveal that university staff conduct invasive surgeries on dogs. The animals' chest cavities are cut open, devices are implanted in and around major blood vessels, catheters are stabbed into their hearts, and cables and wires are tunneled under their skin and out between the dogs' shoulder blades. The dogs who survive the intensive operations are forced to run on treadmills while their heart rates are drastically raised using the implanted devices. In a cruel new twist, Wayne State is now feeding the dogs a "high fat diet" to "induce metabolic syndrome," which can increase their risk of stroke.

Public records also reveal that Wayne State's botched surgeries have led to many dogs suffering such extreme internal injuries that their chest cavities fill with blood, making it painfully difficult to breathe and requiring university staff to put them out of their misery. Other dogs are found dead in their cages. Since 2010 alone, Wayne State has killed more than 150 dogs.

We believe that scientists supported by the NIH must focus on research that makes Americans healthy. The dog experiments at Wayne State are undermining that goal—they are wasting public


money that should be used to improve public health. Patient trials, studies involving 3D organoids, and donated and diseased human hearts—those are research methods that produce useful results. In 2015, the Texas Heart Institute stopped using dogs research altogether, stating that “the canine physiology is not the optimal match.”


We make this request at a time when science—including your agency—is quickly moving away from dog experiments. In April, FDA announced its plan to replace dogs and other animals in drug testing. In May, NIH shut down its last in-house beagle lab. In June, the U.S. Navy announced it will no longer use dogs or cats in research.


Project #HL055473 at Wayne State is scheduled to expire in March 2026. We request that you direct the NIH to deny funding to the project beyond that time and deny funding for any projects involving dogs requested by the same researcher.


Thank you for your work on behalf of the American people.


Sincerely,


  
Joseph A. Aragona  
State Representative  
60th House District


  
Angela Rigas  
State Representative  
79th House District

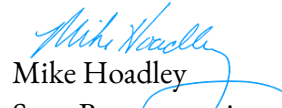
  
Jason Woolford  
State Representative  
50th House District

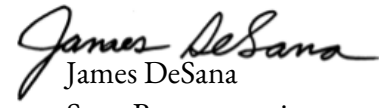
  
Emily Dievendorf  
State Representative  
77th House District

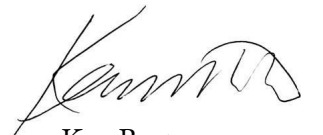
  
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State Representative  
10th House District


  
Alicia St. Germaine  
State Representative  
62nd House District

  
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32nd House District

  
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