



October 23, 2017

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction
and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction
and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Schatz:

I am writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) to urge that as you consider FY18 appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), you remove language in H.R. 3219, the Make America Secure Appropriations Act of 2017, added through House Amendment 226. The amendment prohibits the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research program from conducting vital research involving dogs. The prohibition will not only impede scientific progress but also unnecessarily delay research advances that promote and sustain the health and well-being of our nation's veterans and the larger public.

Based on the conviction that research with nonhuman animals is a necessary component of basic and applied research on health, APA strongly supports humanely conducted, ethically sound, and scientifically valid research with nonhuman animals. APA has a membership of more than 115,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students and, for nearly 100 years, through its Committee on Animal Research and Ethics, APA has promulgated guidelines for the ethical care and treatment of nonhuman animals in research.

Research with nonhuman animals has and continues to play a critical role in furthering our understanding of health as well as diseases and disorders, many of which afflict both humans and other animals. Based on considerations of particular biological factors, scientists have developed specific animal models to address specific research questions. Dogs are an ideal model for studies of specific issues related to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, narcolepsy, autoimmune functioning, and epilepsy. Given their appropriateness for only certain research questions, dogs comprise less than 1 percent of the nonhuman animals involved in VA-funded research.

As you are aware, in the United States, nonhuman animal research is stringently regulated with overlapping systems of oversight at the federal, state, and local institutional levels, which serves to ensure that the research being conducted is ethically sound and scientifically valid and that the animals involved are afforded humane care and treatment. Thus, the research being conducted at VA has undergone a rigorous

vetting process and been deemed critical to advancing medical breakthroughs. The adoption of House Amendment 226 in the final House legislation will put an end to this important area of research to the detriment of the health of our veterans and the public at large. Secretary Shulkin himself reiterated the importance of this research in an editorial in *USA Today* on September 12, 2017, and cautioned about the harm that would befall seriously disabled veterans if canine research and its related medical advancements are no longer an option.

If APA can be of further assistance or provide additional information, please contact Sangeeta Panicker, PhD, Director of the APA Research Ethics Office, at spanicker@apa.org or 202.336.6000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Howard A. Kurtzman".

Howard Kurtzman, Ph.D.
Acting Executive Director for Science