

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
United States Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

We write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigate current procedures and systems for the public reporting of federal spending on animal research in federal laboratories.

We are troubled by recent reports indicating that information about the cost and operations of the federal government's animal research laboratories – including those involved in controversial experimentation on dogs – are often unavailable to the public and Congress.<sup>1</sup> Transparency about federal spending on animal research is especially critical given some evidence suggesting that such research is often wasteful and inefficient.<sup>2</sup>

In attempting to identify the cost, purpose and outcome of dog experiments in federal research laboratories using government databases, our offices have found that basic information is often unavailable. The information documented in these databases is not always consistent with information provided at other times by federal agencies; some database listings do not include a project description or information regarding whether or not dogs or other animals were used in the project; and others often state, “No funding information available” and “No publications information available.”

These reporting deficiencies are consistent with a 2014 GAO audit that found as many as 98 percent of agency spending entries on the USASpending.gov website were inaccurate and incomplete.<sup>3</sup> While the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (Pub. L. No. 113-101) aims to improve the quality of federal spending information published on USASpending.gov, this website does not include spending data for research projects conducted inside of government agencies that do not involve contracts and grants. The systems in place for publicly reporting details and spending on research in federal laboratories are too often decentralized, incomplete, and difficult to navigate.

---

<sup>1</sup> Brulliard, Karin. “Saving Dogs from Government Research Labs Get Some Bipartisan Attention.” *The Washington Post*, 15 Nov 2016. Accessed at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/animalia/wp/2016/11/15/saving-dogs-from-government-research-labs-gets-some-bipartisan-attention/>

<sup>2</sup> Bock, Eric. “Much Biomedical Research is Wasted, Argues Bracken.” *NIH Record*, 1 July 2016. Accessed at: [https://nihrecord.nih.gov/newsletters/2016/07\\_01\\_2016/story3.htm](https://nihrecord.nih.gov/newsletters/2016/07_01_2016/story3.htm)

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (2014), “Data Transparency: Oversight Needed to Address Underreporting and Inconsistencies on Federal Award Website,” (GAO-14-476). Accessed at: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-476>

Government transparency and accountability are cornerstones of our democracy. The public has a right to know how federal agencies spend their tax dollars and whether this spending improves American lives. Congress must also have access to this information in order to assess the effectiveness of government programs and prevent waste, fraud and abuse.

We respectfully request that the GAO conduct a comprehensive review and produce a report on the following:

1. **Data reporting:** What information about the objectives, methods, results and cost of individual animal research projects conducted by federal agencies is currently required to be reported to Congress and to taxpayers, and what procedures and systems, if any, are currently used by agencies to do so?
2. **Data quality:** Please assess the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of information published on existing public databases about animal research conducted by federal agencies.
3. **Recommendations:** How can existing public reporting procedures and systems be improved to enhance accessibility, thoroughness and accuracy of information available to Congress and taxpayers about animal research conducted by federal agencies?

Thank you for your assistance with this request. If you have any questions, please contact Erica Anhalt in Senator Shaheen's office at [Erica\\_Anhalt@shaheen.senate.gov](mailto:Erica_Anhalt@shaheen.senate.gov) or 202-224-2841.

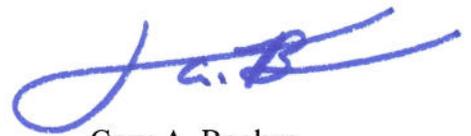
Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator