

FINAL MINUTES

Task Force on Transparency in Publicly Funded Animal Testing Facilities
Patrick Henry Building
East Reading Room
1111 E. Broad St
Richmond, Virginia

Friday, July 26, 2024

The meeting of the Task Force on Transparency in Publicly Funded Animal Testing Facilities (Task Force) convened at approximately 9:00 a.m. on Friday, July 26, 2024, at the Patrick Henry Building. Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Joseph Guthrie called the meeting to order.

PRESENT

Joseph Guthrie

Dr. Paul Smith

Suzanne Griffin

Dr. Annette Hildabrand

Daphna Nachminovitch

Sharon Adams

Will Lowrey

Dr. D. Josh Cohen

Dr. Raphael Malbrue

Steve Weddle

Megan Rhyne

Maria Everett

Hon. Jennifer Boysko

Hon. Hillary Pugh Kent

Hon. Shelly Simonds

Dr. Dr. Stephan Wildeus

REPRESENTING

Chair, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)

Vice Chair, State Council of Higher Education in Virginia
R1 University, Virginia Tech

R2 University, James Madison University

Animal Welfare, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

Animal Welfare, Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters

Animal Welfare, Animal Partisan

Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee Member,
Virginia Commonwealth University

American College of Laboratory Animal Testing Facility
Veterinarian, University of Virginia

Virginia Press Association

Virginia Coalition for Open Government

Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council

Senate of Virginia, Senate District 38

Virginia House of Delegates, House District 67

Virginia House of Delegates, House District 70

Historically black colleges and universities replacing R3
University, Virginia State University

ABSENT

Hon. William Stanley, Jr.

Senate of Virginia, Senate District 7

STAFF PRESENT

Kelly Altizer, Associate Director of Operations, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN)

Mike Foreman, Special Projects Manager, IEN

Meredith Keppel, Senior Associate, IEN

Kevin Schmidt, Director of Office of Policy, Planning, and Research, VDACS

Isaac Joseph, Policy Analyst, VDACS

INTRODUCTION

Commissioner Guthrie began the meeting by introducing himself and Dr. Paul Smith and provided an overview of the Task Force and the Task Force's mandate from the General Assembly pursuant to Chapters 675 and 693 of the 2024 Acts of Assembly. Commissioner

Guthrie also asked the bill patrons, Senator Boysko and Delegate Simonds, as well as Delegate Kent to provide introductory comments.

Kelly Altizer (Associate Director of Operations, IEN), Mike Foreman (Special Projects Manager, IEN), and Meredith Keppel (Senior Associate, IEN) introduced themselves as the facilitation team for the Task Force. Ms. Altizer reviewed IEN's history with similar projects. Ms. Altizer also reviewed the ethics guidelines that IEN follows and acknowledged that although IEN is a part of the University of Virginia (a stakeholder in the Task Force), the IEN team will be a neutral third-party facilitator. Mr. Foreman reviewed the meeting agenda and the goals for this meeting. Each member of the Task Force introduced themselves, the organization they were representing, and what success for this Task Force looked like for them.

BREAK

At approximately 9:55 a.m. the Task Force took a short break and reconvened at approximately 10:10 a.m.

DISCUSSION

IEN posed each member of the Task Force with the question: *In your view, what, if any, deficiencies are there in transparency around publicly funded animal testing facilities?* Each member of the Task Force had an opportunity to voice their concerns and questions regarding the systems in place for reporting or making publicly available information about animal testing at public universities. Task Force members engaged in discussion and answered each other's questions.

IEN then posed each member of the Task Force with the question: *What is working well, or what are areas that might need improvement?* Each member of the Task Force had an opportunity to answer the question.

Following the discussion, Ms. Altizer summarized the following themes and next steps:

- There is a lot of information that exists. How can we make it easily accessible for folks looking for it?
- Context is important when giving information but is not essential; folks would like the numbers even if no context is given.
- There is a desire to be careful about how transparency impacts the state and may slow down research.
- Acknowledgement that conversations on this topic and with the universities moves the needle a lot.
- There is a need to better understand FOIA exemptions and whether Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees are public bodies.
- Greater understanding desired around what the public truly wants to know.

A suggestion was offered that future meeting topics cover (i) what information is currently accessible, (ii) what information can be made more accessible, and (iii) what information should only be available when requested.

The group agreed on this list as a summary of the discussion.

The discussion concluded at approximately 11:40 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

At approximately 11:45 a.m. the Task Force opened to receive public comment from in-person attendees. Lisa Balance, Associate Vice President for Strategy and Regulatory Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University, noted that the U.S. Department of Agriculture website is searchable for every report from Virginia, including inspection reports. A member of the public would not need to go to each institution's website to find the reports.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 11:50 a.m. the Task Force adjourned.