Escape of Non-Human Primates in South Carolina Serves as Call for Congress to Pass FDA Modernization Act 3.0

Animals provide unreliable data to pharmaceutical companies, causing harm to animals, driving up drug prices, and delaying cures and treatments

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, November 13, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As officials continue the capture of up to 43 female rhesus monkeys who bolted earlier this week from the Alpha Genesis primate research center in South Carolina, animal advocates are renewing their call for Congress to pass the FDA Modernization Act 3.0. Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C. 1, in whose district the facility is located, is a cosponsor of the bill, while Rep. Buddy Carter, R-Ga. 1, whose district is close to the facility, led it.

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> *Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action*

The non-human primates managed to escape a breeding facility in Yemassee, S.C., raising concerns about the conditions in which these animals are kept and the potential threats they pose to local communities.

"The animal-testing industry, and the FDA, are clinging to the use of primates for drug screening even though the animals are enormously expensive to purchase and maintain and are not reliable in predicting human reactions to experimental drugs," said Wayne Pacelle, president of the Center for a Humane Economy. "It is past due for FDA and the pharmaceutical industry to embrace 21st-century strategies built on human-based biology and leave the costly, non-predictive animal models in the rearview mirror."

Alpha Genesis is a primate research facility located in Yemassee and known for breeding and supplying non-human primates for drug screening and other biomedical testing. Over the years, the facility has faced scrutiny and criticism regarding its treatment of animals and compliance with animal welfare regulations. It has been cited for various animal welfare violations by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

These violations have included issues related to inadequate housing, insufficient veterinary care, and failure to provide proper enrichment for the animals. The facility also has a history of incidents that have raised concerns about its practices. For example, in the past, there have been reports of escapes and neglect, leading to investigations by animal welfare advocates and regulatory bodies.

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Officials at the Center for a Humane Economy emphasize that the reliance on outdated animal-testing methods, including the use of primates, can lead to ineffective research outcomes, as evidenced by the failure rates of experimental drugs.

“Animal testing is not only unreliable, but it also prolongs the search for effective treatments,” said Tamara Drake, director of research and regulatory affairs for the Center for a Humane Economy. “We must pivot towards animal-free methods that are scientifically valid and aligned with modern medical research.”

The FDA Modernization Act 2.0, championed by the Center and Animal Wellness Action, was a significant stride in eliminating archaic testing mandates. Since its passage in 2023, however, the FDA has not sufficiently implemented the necessary regulatory changes. The proposed FDA Modernization Act 3.0 (H.R. 7248 and S. 5046) aims to update these regulations to embrace 21st-century innovations in drug development.

Senators Cory Booker, D-N.J., and Eric Schmitt, R-Mo. Rand Paul, R-Ky., Mike Braun, R-Ind., Angus King, I-Maine, John Kennedy, R-La., Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., lead the Senate bill.

In the House, Reps. Buddy Carter, R-Ga., Nanette Barragan, D-Calif., Diana Harshbarger, R-Tenn., Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Michael Waltz, R-Fla.,Troy Carter, D-La., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Troy Nehls, R-Texas, Lance Gooden, R-Texas, Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, and Rep. Mace lead the companion measure.

The Center for a Humane Economy urges citizens to advocate for the swift passage of this vital legislation to protect both human health and animal welfare while ensuring ethical research practices. By eliminating the reliance on outdated animal models, the FDA can pave the way for

safer, more effective treatments for everyone.

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