The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

May 21st, 2019

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Schatz,

The American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET) opposes the inclusion of Sec. 247 in the House's FY 2020 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. Language in Sec. 247 would prohibit the VA from using FY 20 appropriated funds to conduct distress category D and E research on canines. The adoption of similar language by the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies will freeze scientific research with the potential to benefit veterans.

ASPET is a 5,000 member scientific society whose members conduct essential basic and clinical pharmacological research and are employed by academia, government, large pharmaceutical companies, small biotech companies, and non-profit organizations. ASPET members work in a variety of different fields and their efforts help to develop new medicines and therapeutic agents to fight existing and emerging diseases.

Canine research at the VA is vital for scientific advancements in health care that benefit veterans. Canine research plays an important role in the development of treatments and therapies for cancer and kidney disease, and recent research at the VA using canines is responsible for the development of an FDA-approved artificial pancreas. The similarities between humans and canines' cardiovascular systems, in particular, makes canines ideal models for research on heart disease. Researchers at the VA are currently using category E canine models to study arrhythmias to develop better preventions for heart failure.

Canine research at the VA is already minimal and well-regulated. Less than 0.05% of the canine research in the U.S. is conducted at the VA, and the department spent just $100,000 on canine research in FY 18. Since 1995, studies at the department involving canines have

decreased by approximately 95%. When a canine study is submitted for approval—including those involving distress categories of D and E—it must pass multiple layers of scrutiny, including from the Chief Research and Development Officer, the Undersecretary for Health, and the VA Secretary. Additionally, all canine research in the U.S. is subject to the protections and regulations of the Animal Welfare Act and the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Careful oversight ensures that canines' pain and distress is minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Including Sec. 247 in the Senate's Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill will curtail impactful research at the VA that improves veterans' health and further burden scientists with additional regulation. We request that you reject the language in the House bill.

Respectfully,

Edward T. Morgan, PhD
ASPET President