



April 14, 2016

The Honorable John McCain, Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry, Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator McCain, Senator Reed, Representative Thornberry and Representative Smith:

We at the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) urge you to support the Battlefield Excellence Through Superior Training (BEST) Practices Act (HR 1095/S 587) and related legislation that would responsibly phase out the outmoded use of animals in U.S. military medical training in favor of educationally-superior, ethical and economical human simulation methods.

AMSA is the nation's oldest and largest independent organization more than 40,000 physicians-in-training. As such, we represent the voices of future physicians across the country, and we advocate for health and safety for all.

At AMSA's Annual Meeting last week, our leadership voted unanimously to adopt language to our guiding principles stating that AMSA, "STRONGLY URGES the U.S. Department of Defense to fully phase out the use of animals in trauma training exercises and require the use of human simulation-based training by October 1, 2020"(emphasis in original). This is the date set by the BEST Practices Act for a full transition to simulation-based military training, and we believe this is conservative, responsible and achievable.

We applaud the House and Senate for repeatedly voting in support of a transition away from outdated animal use in military training, including in the FY13 NDAA, which included language stating that Congress, "believes that the Department should continue to aggressively pursue alternatives to the use of live animals in combat trauma training."

We also appreciate the Department of Defense's (DOD) stated intention to replace the suboptimal use of animals with modern medical simulation tools that are universally used in civilian medical student education and trauma training and increasingly employed by many U.S. military groups, including the Uniformed Services University. Our nation's physicians-in-training are taught life-saving medical procedures using proven human-based simulation methods, and the members of our Armed Services can and should be taught using these superior tools too.

The BEST Practices Act is consistent with the intentions of Congress and the DOD to improve emergency medical training by focusing on human-relevant simulation tools instead of animal-based training that, in the words of DOD researchers, “do not present the correct anatomy for realistic training, are not reusable, are expensive, and raise ethical issues.”

We firmly support HR 1095/S 587 and related efforts to replace DOD animal use in favor of superior human simulation-based training methods, and we join the voices of other organizations of healthcare professionals and urge you to pass it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah V. Hall".

Deborah V. Hall, M.D.

AMSA National President 2015-16