

March 11, 2024

Representative Susan R. Donovan, Chair and Members
Rhode Island House Health and Human Services Committee
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H.7886

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying in support of H.7886, a bill that serves the interests of conscientious consumers on behalf of the 350,000 rabbits, guinea pigs, mice, and rats who suffer and die in cruel, archaic testing protocols each year for the cosmetics industry.

I started shopping for “cruelty-free” cosmetics in the late 1990’s, when most mainstream companies were engaged in animal testing. If they weren’t doing it their own labs, they were contracting with external labs to do the testing for them. Back then, I had to go to health food stores or places like Whole Foods to purchase non-animal tested cosmetics, and they were expensive. Today, humane cosmetics are more affordable and accessible, because decades of effort to raise public awareness have finally resulted in high demand for non-animal tested products. Unfortunately, as public awareness of the cruelty of animal testing has grown, so have corporate efforts to “humane wash” products with false assurances that they are humanely produced. While thousands of companies have committed to eliminating animal testing in their product lines, there are many companies domestically and abroad that still engage in animal testing.

Consumers deserve transparency, oversight and consistency. The American Anti-Vivisection Society’s *Leaping Bunny* certification, backed by the Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics, entails rigorous oversight and auditing. The *Leaping Bunny* logo is the only internationally recognized symbol of assurance that no new animal testing was used in any phase of product development by a company, its laboratories, or its ingredient suppliers. PETA’s *Cruelty Free* bunny logo, and Australia’s *Not Tested on Animals* bunny logo are comparable variations. Unfortunately, the proliferation of derivative bunny logos and misleading claims on product packaging, such as ‘*cruelty free*,’ ‘*not tested on animals*,’ ‘*against animal testing*,’ and ‘*this finished product not tested on animals*,’ threaten to lead consumers astray. Conversely, there are companies that don’t engage in animal testing, but make no claims at all on their labels, and they are overlooked as consumers are drawn to companies making false claims.

Most consumers are already trying to make conscientious purchases, and they deserve regulatory protection. If humane washing goes unchecked, consumers will become jaded. H.7886 will close the gap between good intention and ethical purchasing power, ensuring that the standards people demand are accurately represented in every Rhode Island marketplace. 11 states and 45 countries have already passed cosmetic testing bans. There are nearly 50 validated non-animal testing alternatives using human cells and tissues, or computer modeling that are more accurate, cost effective and humane. Recently, the federal government passed legislation that would allow drug sponsors the option to use scientifically rigorous, proven non-animal test methods when suitable. If the nation is willing to support alternatives in drug testing, surely Rhode Island can step up to support alternatives for nonessential products like cosmetics.

Sincerely,

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