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May 25, 2018

Dennis Assanis, PhD
President
University of Delaware
04 HULLIHEN HALL
NEWARK, DE 19716

Dear President Assanis,

This letter, from the Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA), is a statement of support for Tania Roth, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Delaware, and her research on rodent models of the adverse impacts of fetal alcohol exposure. RSA is a scientific society that promotes research and the acquisition and dissemination of scientific knowledge about alcoholism and alcohol-related problems.

Dr. Roth and her research have recently been the target of a campaign of harassment and misinformation by the anti-animal research group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). In letters to you, and to the federal agency that supports much of Dr. Roth's research on behavioral impacts of adverse early life experiences, PETA grossly misrepresented the relevance of her research. One line of her research with rodents that RSA can attest to focuses on understanding the neurobiological bases of fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).

Studies conducted in the 1970s using animal models of fetal alcohol exposure were the first to confirm the role of alcohol in observational reports of FAS what is now known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). Unfortunately, educational efforts about the harms of alcohol consumption during pregnancy have been only partially effective. FASD is prevalent in society with recent estimates as high as 2-5% of all school age children in the United States and Western European countries. A long history of overwhelming evidence points to the benefits of animal models of FASD in yielding scientific knowledge of the biological effects of fetal alcohol exposure on brain and behavior. This work has led to advancements in early detection and prevention that would have otherwise been impossible. Although much progress has been made, prevalence of FASD has remained steady. Animal models are required to control factors such as alcohol dose, timing, and patterns of exposure in combination with genetic, biological, and environmental variables that produce the spectrum of behavioral deficits associated with FASD.

We are deeply concerned that Dr. Roth's valuable and scientifically meritorious work is being condemned by an avowed anti-animal research group whose ultimate goal is to end all animal research at institutions like the University of Delaware. Her research studies have been appropriately

vetted through an integrated system of oversight, including local, state and federal regulations to ensure research animal well-being, as well as through peer review attesting to the scientific significance and rigor of the project. Although we appreciate public concern about the well-being of animals in research, it is important to note that the well-being of these animals is monitored and assessed by appropriate governing bodies that have the difficult job of weighing any negative outcomes for research subjects against the potential for important contributions to scientific knowledge.

As members of the scientific community, we must not tolerate these damaging attacks on the research enterprise that serves the public's interest. We urge you to join in the public defense of her research because we cannot allow groups like PETA to determine the course of science through the spread of misinformation to the public. Regulatory decisions about the ethics and scientific merit of research with nonhuman animals must be, and should continue to be, made by bodies with trusted expertise, not by entities that are fundamentally opposed to all research with nonhuman animals. If we can be of assistance in any way, please contact Julia Chester at jcheste@purdue.edu. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Julia A. Chester, PhD and Donna M. Platt, PhD

Co-chairs of the Animal Research and Ethics Committee
Research Society on Alcoholism