



July 29, 2025

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University of Washington

Christina Cruzen, DVM, DACLAM
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Mari Ostendorf
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Aubrey Schoenleben, PhD, CPIA
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Delivered via e-mail: sti2@uw.edu; ccruzen@uw.edu; vpresearch@uw.edu; aubreys@uw.edu

Dear Dr. Thompson-Iritani, Dr. Cruzen, Ms. Ostendorf, and Dr. Schoenleben:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 10 million members and supporters globally, over 134,000 of whom live in Washington—to request that you, as authorities over the Washington National Primate Research Center at the University of Washington (UW), act in accordance with your responsibility to the animals at UW by taking necessary steps following the recent suspension of all four of Michele Basso's animal protocols to ensure the safety of the monkeys and other animals who were in her control. Specifically, we call on you to block Basso's access to all rooms with animals, move to terminate the suspended protocols, and retire the surviving animals who were on these protocols. While the IACUC's suspension of these protocols on July 17 was a strong step toward ending this rogue experimenter's assault on the rules that provide basic protection for monkeys in laboratories, we are concerned, as are many IACUC members, that these monkeys are still at risk.

Basso's noncompliances and refusal to take responsibility

The committee had an approximately 70-minute conversation about the pattern of noncompliances in Basso's laboratory and her refusal to accept meaningful responsibility despite multiple letters and meetings with committee members. The noncompliances discussed in the meeting included:

- An October 2022 incident in which a monkey didn't receive water for more than 24 hours;

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- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

- an August 2023 issue concerning a repeated intracranial surgery; the monkey suffered from seizures after the first one, which was not reported to the attending veterinarian;
- an improper June 2024, 2800-mile shipment of four geriatric monkeys, which resulted in one monkey having to be euthanized immediately upon arrival;
- a January 2025 incident in which staff discovered that six macaques underwent significantly more imaging procedures than were approved in her protocol, and;
- the newly revealed instance brought up at the beginning of the discussion, regarding Basso's laboratory continuing to do behavior experiments on monkeys whom Basso had transferred to the colony protocol a month before.

Multiple committee members cited a concern about the trend of Basso's refusal to take responsibility, which perpetuates the ongoing issues in her laboratory:

"I've had experience with the previous noncompliances from this PI where it feels to me like the PI hasn't taken responsibility for the things that happened and I'm concerned this happened again and it seems to now be a trend." – Ken Gordon

"It's hard to understand why every time they say, 'we take responsibility,' that then it doesn't seem like it changes anything that happens in the future because we have to keep having to talk about this PI over and over." – Andrew Burich

The noncompliances and lack of cooperation didn't start at UW, as we've been pointing out to UW officials for years.

Same story, different university

As we've [previously written](#) to UW, Basso's troubled history with her experiments, including many poorly performed surgeries on primates and disregard for veterinary staff instruction, spans decades and is well-documented.

Basso was a professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW-Madison) from 2000 to 2012, and her time there was marked by violations of the Animal Welfare Act and a suspension from using animals. Dr. Janet Welter, the chief campus veterinarian at UW-Madison, [stated](#) that Basso "has had significant difficulties with the cranial explant model—many more than other investigators using the same model in the same animal care unit with the same veterinary staff. There is a lengthy history of non-cooperation with veterinary staff, including failure to follow explicit instructions." Basso's actions were so egregious that the Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) took the unprecedented step of shutting down her primate laboratory. Her month-long appeal of the university's animal oversight committee's decision was eventually successful based only on procedural technicalities.

In 2012, Basso left UW-Madison and went to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and her decade there also included conflict with veterinarians. The university's Animal Research Committee (ARC) and attending veterinarian cited many of the same issues that UW is now dealing with, including her unskilled surgical approach, her inadequate responses to official letters and meetings concerning her noncompliances, and her attempt to do additional procedures, including a surgery, on a primate who suffered from an infection after a previous operation. Staff

expressed concern for monkeys on her protocols when she was hired as Director of the Washington NPRC.

UW had ample warning of Basso's conduct at other universities before putting her in charge of the primate center. While the university did eventually demote Basso from her leadership role, it has failed to prevent suffering of the animals under her control.

We respectfully request the following actions:

Immediately and permanently revoke Dr. Basso's access to all UW vivariums

During the July 17 IACUC meeting, committee members expressed concern about Basso's continued access to animal housing areas. Ken Gordon was particularly concerned, asking if they could do a second part of the suspension motion "to make sure that those monkeys stay safe, are protected during this changeover period," adding, "I know...other circumstances you lock down all their accessibility at the same time so they can't do damage on their way out." He clarified that he wanted to know if there were "any other steps that we need to take to ensure the safety of all the animals on these protocols."

While attending veterinarian Dr. Cruzen was excused from the discussion due to a conflict as the PI on the colony protocol, it appears that the attending veterinarian has the authority to deny a PI's access to the vivarium. Dr. Cruzen shared concerns regarding Basso in several IACUC meetings and in reports, including a [minority report](#) earlier this year, in which she criticized Basso's lies about the geriatric monkey shipment and her "refusal to accept responsibility." Dr. Cruzen also made known her disappointment in the IACUC's inadequate response to that shipment. We urge her to immediately and permanently block Basso's access from any room with monkeys or other animals.

Terminate all four of the suspended protocols

Please initiate or recommend the formal termination of her protocols. Given the IACUC's suspension, the severity of past violations, and the questionable data from the experiments, continuation of these protocols is unjustifiable.

Multiple committee members expressed concern about the usability of the data that's been gathered over the years on these protocols under Basso. One declared, "The phrase that keeps coming up in my head is 'tainted well,' and I am worried that the data that we've taken from these animals up to this point...may not be usable." Another stated, "I was under the impression that if there's noncompliances associated with an experiment, that you aren't actually supposed to use that data to publish on, anyway...It may already not be usable."

These elderly monkeys have been subjected to botched procedures, significantly more imaging procedures than allowed, unapproved behavioral experiments, unreported seizures, and more. No journal worth its ink would publish any findings from studies that started with the laundry list of problems outlined by the IACUC.

Ensure the immediate retirement of the approximately 11 monkeys assigned to the protocols

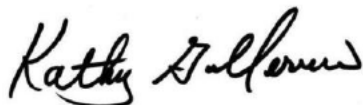
Basso has a documented history of transferring animals to new institutions, and there is a risk she may attempt to do so again if she leaves UW. The monkeys she brought to UW from UCLA were first transferred from UW-Madison.

As Dr. Melissa Berg said in the IACUC meeting, “our directive is to do what is best for the animals and serve these animals, and not only the animals that are currently on her protocol, but potentially animals at other institutions if this individual were to move somewhere else.” The IACUC voted unanimously to suspend all her protocols and UW should take additional actions within its power to support the intention of the committee. This is critical as she has a history of appealing IACUC decisions.

According to the most recent census data that PETA has from February of this year, there were 11 monkeys and an unknown number of mice assigned to Basso’s suspended protocols. These monkeys have been subjected to years of experiments, surgeries and other procedures that are, according to the IACUC, deeply flawed. The university has an obligation to prevent further harm to these animals, who never should have been dragged to UW in the first place. The best way to do this is to retire the monkeys and mice who have somehow survived on these protocols. The least the university can do is ensure that no more harm comes to these animals.

I urge you to take swift and decisive action. May I hear from you? Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathy Guillermo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathy" and last name "Guillermo" clearly distinguishable.

Kathy Guillermo
Senior Vice President
Laboratory Investigations Department
PETA

cc: UW Board of Regents, regents@uw.edu