



September 16, 2015

William H. Gates, III
Trustee and CEO
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
500 Fifth Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109

Yusuf Mehdi
Vice President, Windows and Devices Group
Microsoft
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, Washington 98052

Dear Mr. Gates and Mr. Mehdi:

On behalf of the National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) and our more than 360 university and corporate members nationwide, I write to express our concern with your selection of the Beagle Freedom Project (BFP) to receive \$500,000 from Microsoft's Upgrade Your World contest. While it may appear your contribution will go toward improving the lives of animals, the facts tell a different story.

BFP, since its founding, has been publicly opposed to the use of all animal models in life-saving and life-improving biomedical research. Neither veterinary nor human medicine would be where they are today without the amazing contributions of dogs, cats and other species. Cancer therapies, vaccines, organ transplants, reconstructive surgeries, and other innovations have been brought to fruition through this research. Dogs, for example, contributed immeasurably to cardiovascular procedures, including heart by-pass surgery. And of the top 25 most prescribed drugs in America, dogs were an essential model in the development of 22 of those drugs.

Look no further than the leadership of BFP to understand its extreme position on animal rights. Earlier this year, Shannon Keith, the president and founder of BFP, penned an opinion piece in the Seattle Times titled, "UW animal lab represents archaic, abusive practice," vilifying biomedical research programs at the University of Washington. She has also directed a 2006 documentary glamorizing the extremist and radical efforts of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), a group classified as a domestic terror organization by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). As an attorney, Keith has represented similar extremists in court, one of which was BFP's own Director of Operations, Kevin Chase. Chase, a.k.a. Kevin Jonas and Kevin Kjonaas, was convicted under the federal Animal Enterprise Protection Act in 2006 for crimes connected to his leadership role in Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC), a group that viciously targeted researchers and others across the country. Kjonaas was sentenced to six years in federal prison for organizing campaigns of threats and harassment against researchers, their families, and a multitude of companies that conducted business with research institutions.

As evidenced by the votes received in the Upgrade Your World contest, they have gone to extensive lengths to appear as a moderate animal rescue organization. BFP's well-designed advertisements, social media posts, and YouTube videos hide the true intentions they hope to achieve through legislative and public relations means. BFP, using as props beagle dogs retired from research programs, has promoted a

message that laboratory animals are abused and deprived of creature comforts, which could not be further from the truth.

Further, BFP appears to be misleading the public into thinking research animals located at American colleges and universities are widely adoptable in exchange for a fee. Taken directly from the BFP website, they claim: “Beagle Freedom Project’s Identity Campaign will empower you to adopt a laboratory dog or cat.” This statement is simply untrue. As a result of the so-called Identity Campaign, members of the public are currently sending letters to universities asking when they can arrange to pick up their research animal, apparently unaware that the research animals are not actually being offered by the institutions. The end results are confusion and public relations challenges which impose financial and reputational costs to universities.

Efforts to find homes for former research animals are not new, novel, or unique. The fact is we all owe a debt of gratitude to research animals which have given so much to improve health. As such, research programs in the United States rehome animals when appropriate with little fanfare, and many research institutions work closely with reputable rescue organizations that do not have an alternate agenda like BFP. Research animals have been purposely bred for research and are not typical domesticated animals. Some are not suited for adoption and many need proper acclimatization and evaluation before placement in post-research homes. The existing efforts organized by research programs for adoption include stringent guidelines for evaluating potential adoptive homes, something that private shelters or adoption organizations may not be equipped or trained to do. Researchers and their veterinary care staff, not BFP, are best suited to analyze these important criteria when rehoming an animal and deciding if and when an animal is suitable for adoption.

After reviewing the list of other awardees in the Upgrade Your World contest, it would appear that BFP is out of place when compared to the others. Worthy organizations like the Special Olympics, Save the Children, CARE, the Malala Fund, and Pencils of Promise are admirable, sincere efforts with worthy goals. BFP’s mission and tactics are not.

It is ironic that Microsoft, whose founders have dedicated countless millions of dollars to provide vaccinations and other prevention medicines to alleviate disease around the world, is supporting an organization whose very mission and campaigns could undermine these noble efforts.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Frankie L. Trull
President