



March 5, 2020

To: Joint meeting of the House and Senate Health Care Committees

Re: COVID-19 preparedness

Chair Monnes Anderson, Chair Salinas, and Members of the House and Senate Health Care Committees,

For the record, my name is Danny Jacobs, and I have the honor to serve the people of Oregon as the president of Oregon Health & Science University. I am joined by Dr. Renee Edwards, chief medical officer of OHSU Health; and Dr. Dawn Nolt, an Associate Professor in the OHSU Division of Infectious Diseases. We are here today, along with our colleagues from the Oregon Health Authority, to discuss the rapidly changing situation related to the cases of COVID-19 in Oregon, and OHSU's preparations and thoughts regarding how to respond.

As Oregon's only academic health center, we believe it is our duty, responsibility and public mission to do everything possible to be prepared to respond to infectious outbreaks like COVID-19 in support of the health and well-being of all Oregonians. We also believe we have a responsibility—one we take very seriously—to partner with the state of Oregon to address threats to public health. We began convening an emergency preparedness group as soon as initial reports of the novel coronavirus were released in early January. OHSU's emergency operations center is currently meeting at least daily to assess the situation, respond accordingly in real time, and to communicate with our employees and others.

Our institution steadfastly applies public health best practices including comprehensive education, preventive care and strategic deployment of resources.

For example, we've established a web presence on our public OHSU.edu homepage that contains up-to-date resources with the latest news and information regarding COVID-19, guidelines on what to do if exposure is suspected, ways the community can help stop the spread of the virus and other pertinent links to information from the CDC. Dr. Edwards is going to provide further detail on some of the steps we have taken and are taking to prepare and respond to the current situation.

I often talk about “The Why.” What is the purpose of our work at OHSU? Why do we do what we do? In times like this, the answer is crystal clear: We have the knowledge and expertise necessary to support our communities. Not just to treat people when they are sick, but to complete research to help prevent disease and protect the people of our state from future outbreaks, including training the next generation of clinicians. For example, OHSU researchers are actively engaged in studying and improving our understanding of COVID-19, and recently published research with the Anesthesia Patient Safety Foundation titled “Perioperative Considerations for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus,” describing practical measures that can be implemented to keep health care personnel and non-infected patients safe.

We are fully prepared to provide care to patients with respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, and are committed to partnering in order to mitigate COVID-19’s impact in the region.

We are also committed to the safety of our providers and staff members. For example, we continue to ensure that the personal protective equipment we have is strategically deployed, and we support the Governor’s efforts to bring more equipment to Oregon along with other resources.

It is our duty and our responsibility to collaborate across the state to serve the health needs of Oregonians. As my final point, I want to express our deep commitment to working with every hospital and health care organization to ensure needs are met as we collectively address COVID-19.

Thank you.

Danny Jacobs, M.D., M.P.H., FACS
President
Oregon Health & Science University