

JEFF GOLDEN
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 3



OREGON STATE SENATE

April 6, 2021

ODA Director Alexis Taylor
OHA Director Pat Allen
Stephanie Hallock, Chair, Oregon Board of Agriculture

Directors Hallock and Allen, Chair Hallock, greetings,

Yesterday my Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee heard SB [832](#), which effectively calls for banning mink farm operations. The rationale is centered on concerns that mink could exacerbate COVID 19 transmission to humans, and possibly generate variants of the virus that complicate our recovery from the pandemic.

Yesterday's testimony (starting at approximately 31:00 on [this video](#)) which included comments from State Veterinarian Ryan Scholz, was extremely divergent with regard to the magnitude of this risk. I found it too ambiguous to proceed with legislation in this session that would effectively eliminate a sector of Oregon commerce. At the same time, I remain concerned with much of what was said in this hearing.

The most responsible course at this moment, in my view, is the best vetting of relevant evidence that can be undertaken quickly. That would not extend to new research efforts, but rather collection and collating of the best available data and reports (some of which was referenced by yesterday's witnesses) and some level of analysis by staff with appropriate expertise. With an appreciation for the intense demands on your agencies right now, I would not expect an exhaustive report. But a disciplined, unbiased review of existing information to assess the level of enhanced transmission risk from Oregon mink farming operations would be very much in the public interest right now. If that risk level were judged to be sufficiently high, I would favor administrative, or, if necessary, expedited legislative action as appropriate to protect public health.

I would very much appreciate knowing what your agencies could offer in this connection, and am ready to collaboratively participate if that would be helpful. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Senator Jeff Golden
Chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery (SNRWR)

cc: Senate President Peter Courtney
House Speaker Tina Kotek
SNWR members Senator Heard, Patterson, Prozanski, and Kennemer
SNWR LPRO staff Beth Patrino