

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2021

Representative Brad Witt
Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and
Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE, H-382
Salem, OR 97301

Representative Vikki Breese-Iverson
Vice-Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and
Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE, H-377
Salem, OR 97301

Representative Zach Hudson
Vice-Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and
Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE, H-284
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Witt, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

In 2017, I partnered with Representative Brock Smith to convene a group of stakeholders in Southern Oregon who are committed to addressing the spread of Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a pathogen that poses severe economic and environmental threats to counties in Southern Oregon. Since that time, our state has proven to be a leader in working to contain SOD and the European strain of the pathogen, EU1. This leadership has been demonstrated through remarkable coordination across party lines, all levels of government, and a broad swath of industries. Continued collaboration to address the spread of SOD and EU1 is essential to the work of preventing the devastating impacts of the pathogen on our local economy and environment.

In my role on the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, I have fought for the federal resources necessary to support efforts in Oregon to address Southern Oak Death, and I will continue to do so as the new Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service. However, the ability to blend resources—including from the state legislature—will be critical to our continued, collective efforts to address the threats that Sudden Oak Death poses to communities in Southern Oregon.

Representative Brock Smith and I have worked together for years with a team of experts and stakeholders to fight for the resources necessary to work collaboratively on a diversity of solutions to address Sudden Oak Death pathogens. I applaud Representative Brock Smith's leadership in sponsoring HB 2663, which will bring additional support and collaboration to the ongoing issue of Sudden Oak Death in Southern Oregon. I echo his call for continued support of a critical, integrated pest management program throughout Curry County.

I urge the Committee to support HB 2663. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey A. Merkley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator