

Dear Committee members,

I am writing to in support of SB 382 to address the dire public health consequences of mink farms in Oregon.

Mink are susceptible to Covid-19 and have the ability to transmit the virus back to humans, potentially in a form that will render vaccines less effective. The virus may also spillover into nature and be impossible to track and control and could infect our native wild species. The risk is real. Over 1,000 people in Denmark tested positive for a mink-related variant. European nations, responding to the outbreaks, have moved to shutter their mink farms. Oregon must act responsibly and follow their lead.

It's not an abstract threat in Oregon. After an outbreak of Covid-19 on an Oregon mink farm in August, three mink escaped from the infected farm, and two of those animals tested positive, meaning they could also infect native wild mink and other wildlife, who could then infect humans who have contact with them.

The small number of mink farms in Oregon are raising mink to sell their pelts to China, because American consumers no longer buy fur. SB 832 will bring mink farming to an end, but also provide help to the mink farmers to transition to new commodities or other lines of work."