

Honored Members of the 82nd Oregon Legislative Assembly,

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of House Bill 3247. I am a Doctoral Candidate at Oregon State University studying Leptospirosis, a zoonotic disease present in the state of Oregon. I co-teach a field course implementing the One-Health philosophy, an integrated, multisectoral and collaborative approach towards understanding disease, recognizing that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The health and success of one component, and likewise its disease and dysfunction, has cascading consequences in the other components. It is within this philosophy that I study leptospirosis. Thanks to the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL), I am able to collaborate with multiple organizations, and produce data that would otherwise be arduous and insubstantial. I see an investment in the OVDL as an investment in the health of Oregon, its people, its domestic animals, and its wildlife.

My study subject, leptospirosis, is a disease caused by a bacterial parasite that causes illness and mortality worldwide in humans, domestic mammals, and wildlife. In Oregon, there have been outbreaks in livestock causing loss of cattle production. There are infections yearly in domestic pets, causing mortality and exposure with co-infection of humans. There is currently an outbreak in sea lions on the coast, but with little information on how these infections occurred, and how many are related, we are unable to fully prepare for subsequent outbreaks or enact proper prevention measures. I am currently working with state, federal, and private organizations to investigate this disease in Oregon, with all of us converging on the OVDL for their expertise and support. The OVDL has been incredibly helpful in communicating with the different departments, in allowing the use of their facilities, and in disseminating their vast knowledge of pathology. I can only imagine how much they would be able to accomplish with more funding and support.

Leptospirosis is largely understudied and chronically underfunded. It is an important example of the burgeoning threat that zoonotic diseases present. Like many zoonoses, we currently do not know the extent of this disease's presence in Oregon, or where it resides between infections. If we are dedicated to the health and safety of humans who live within Oregon, we need to be dedicated to the health and safety of our animal inhabitants.

Investing in the OVDL is an investment in the health and safety of all the inhabitants of the state of Oregon. I hope you consider this letter in your support of HB 3247.

Sincerely,

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