

March 7, 2023

RE: VOTE YES ON HB 2904 TO REQUIRE TRANSPARENCY BY OREGON NATIONAL PRIMATE RESEARCH CENTER

Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Tran, and Members of the Committee:

National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Primate Research Centers (NPRC) were established by Congress in the 1960s to “provide scientists with specialized resources to conduct research with nonhuman primates”.¹

NPRCs are “focused on *building a sustainable supply of nonhuman primates to support health-related research.*”² Despite the charge from Congress for NPRCs to maintain a “supply” of nonhuman primates (NHPs), they have failed to do so. It is now reported that the US has a shortage of primates to use in experiments.³

In November 2022, the United States District Court, Southern District of Florida, issued an [indictment](#) charging two Cambodian wildlife officials and several members of a Hong Kong-based primate-supply company with [illegally exporting hundreds—and potentially more than 2,000—cynomolgus macaques](#), an endangered species, to the United States for research and testing. The indictment is for violation of both the Lacey Act and the Endangered Species Act. The charges include conspiracy and smuggling. The U.S. leads the world in the number of primates it imports for medical research. Between 2017 and May 2022, more than 150,000 monkeys arrived in the U.S. to be used in experiments, according to figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Multiple US companies receiving shipments of these monkeys have received subpoenas from the Department of Justice.

The monkeys were reportedly captured from the wild in Cambodia and falsely labeled as captive bred. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in the 12 months ended September 30, 2022, approximately 60 percent of the non-human primates imported into the U.S. came from Cambodia. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has taken the step of denying permits for import of monkeys from Cambodia.

According to [Science](#), the removal of cynomolgus macaques from the wild is not sustainable. While the actual number of these monkeys in the wild is unclear, the International Union for

¹ <https://nprc.org/about-nprcs/>

² Id.

³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2020/08/america-facing-monkey-shortage/615799/>

Conservation of Nature changed the status of the monkeys from vulnerable to endangered last year, citing growing demand from the research industry as an ongoing threat to their survival.

From 2000 to 2020, wildlife traffickers imported approximately [482,000 primates](#) to the U.S. for laboratory use. Primates are wild animals, whether captured and removed from their wild habitat, or bred for research. Monkeys evolved to live in highly social groups of other monkeys and range over large areas. Their life expectancy in the wild can exceed 40 years.

Because of lack of transparency from ONPRC which would be remedied by this important legislation, we don't know if ONPRC has received primates from Cambodia, including illegally caught and endangered species. We do know however, that ONPRC [is urging](#) US legislators to effectively lift the hold on import of primates from Cambodia, despite the endangered species smuggling scandal which includes indictments from the U.S. Department of Justice.

It is important for Oregonians to know if ONPRC is receiving primates from Cambodia, further threatening an already endangered species, an issue of deep concern to the people of our state. You will recall that in 2016, Oregon voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot measure to protect imperiled wild animal species from commercial exploitation.

The letter to legislators signed by ONPRC and others makes the exaggerated claim that primate supply constraints will hinder the development of human treatments. This disregards the recent passage of federal legislation (FDA Modernization Act 2.0), spearheaded by Animal Wellness Action, the Center for a Humane Economy and endorsed by over 200 biotech, pharmaceutical companies, medical associations, patient advocacy groups and animal welfare groups. The FDA Modernization Act 2.0 lifts the 1938 federal mandate that all new drugs be tested in animals before human trials and allows for modern human-relevant alternatives to animal tests. It also disregards FDA Guidance issued last year on the use of NHPs (*Nonclinical Considerations for Mitigating Nonhuman Primate Supply Constraints Arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance for Industry*). The guidance suggests that due to the shortage of NHPs, drug sponsors should use other methods to address the safety of biologics and small molecule drugs.

The Oregon National Primate Research Center (ONPRC) has the distinction of having the highest number of Animal Welfare Act (AWA) violations in the NPRC system. While NPRCs are charged with overseeing and building a "supply" of primates for research, they are killing them negligently while violating the AWA.

While we have deep concerns about the research being done in the name of science at ONPRC, this proposed legislation will not in any way impede that research. It simply requires that ONPRC provide basic information about its use of nonhuman primates to the state veterinarian, who will be required to promptly post that information on his or her website for the benefit of the people of Oregon.

ONPRC has clearly shown it will not willingly provide basic information about its practices with nonhuman primates. In fact, ONPRC has shown that it will intentionally evade, deceive, and mislead Oregonians about those practices. Clearly only a mandate by the legislature will bring about transparency and accountability.

We urge this Committee to pass HB 2904 with a “do pass” recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of our great state.

Tamara Drake
Director of Research and Regulatory Policy
Animal Wellness Action and Center for a Humane Economy
541-601-4673
tami@centerforahumaneconomy.org