



March 8, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water: House Bill 3247

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Owens, and Committee Members:

The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association supports House Bill 3247, which includes funding for the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) at Oregon State University for its ongoing efforts to monitor, prevent and respond to zoonotic diseases.

Approximately 75% of emerging diseases have an animal origin, with zoonosis such as rabies, brucellosis, leptospirosis, and the avian flu, representing an important human and animal health threat globally as well as here in Oregon. Zoonotic diseases affect both people and animals, and veterinary medicine is central to diagnosing, treating, and eradicating them.

The arrival of COVID-19 in Oregon – and across the country – in early 2020 caught us by surprise. It wasn't soon after its presence became known that Oregonians started becoming ill with the virus. To date, according to the Oregon Health Authority, just under 1 million Oregonians across the state have tested positive for the initial virus and subsequent variants, and nearly 10,000 in our communities have died as a result of contracting COVID.

As health centers nationwide struggled with limited testing for the corona virus that caused COVID-19, the OVDL took the lead to team up with a private Corvallis-based laboratory to increase novel coronavirus testing for medical providers in Oregon and beyond. The lab had to increase the number of pathologists during this challenging time to handle the workload – and still needs additional pathologists for its ongoing work.

Critical funding is needed for the OVDL: for a sufficient number of personnel to address public health concerns; for upgraded and new equipment; and for an important chronic wasting disease testing program. The OVDL is also suffering from an aged infrastructure – the main laboratory was built in 1980 – and a feasibility study and design of a new diagnostic lab is essential to help ensure that the OVDL is progressing along to meet the expected service needs of Oregon – from our citizens to practicing veterinarians to our all-important animal agriculture industries.

We ask for your support of HB 3247.

Sincerely,

Glenn

Glenn M. Kolb, Executive Director
Oregon Veterinary Medical Association

