



January 22, 2025

**House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water**

**RE: House Bill 2167 / Support**

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and Committee Members:

The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association supports House Bill 2167 to allocate \$10 million for the veterinary teaching hospital at Oregon State University and \$3.5 million for the veterinary diagnostic laboratory.

This important funding will help bolster the State's support for educating and training future veterinarians to meet the need for practitioners in Oregon, including our state's animal agriculture industry. It also will benefit public and animal health through disease surveillance and diagnosis.

The Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine (CCVM) is one of only 33 accredited veterinary programs in the country – and our only veterinary school. Yet it ranks 31 out of 33 veterinary colleges in state funding at \$3.4 million, while the national average is \$13.4 million annually. Tuition from students in each class size – approximately 90 per class – isn't nearly enough to ensure the ongoing excellence we expect from its teaching and service.

This funding disparity places a significant strain on CCVM's ability to attract and retain top faculty, invest in cutting-edge research, and provide state-of-the-art clinical training for future veterinarians. Without increased state support, Oregon risks falling behind in veterinary education, limiting access to skilled professionals who are essential to animal health, public safety, and agricultural industries across the state.

The Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) is the only accredited veterinary laboratory in the state and often collaborates with Oregon's State Veterinarian and Public Health Veterinarian. Both the CCVM and OVDL have an essential role in helping to ensure better public and animal health in the state, yet funding has continued to lag the rest of the country for years.

The OVDL is a frontline defense in protecting Oregon's public health, agricultural economy, and wildlife from emerging and zoonotic diseases. Its role in disease surveillance, food safety, and outbreak response is critical—not only for animal health but also for preventing the spread of illnesses that can impact humans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the OVDL demonstrated its essential value by rapidly adapting to support statewide testing efforts, showcasing its capacity to respond to public health

crises. However, without increased funding and facility upgrades, the laboratory's ability to provide timely, accurate diagnostics and safeguard both animal and human populations is at risk. Investing in the OVDL is an investment in Oregon's health, economy, and future resilience against evolving disease threats.

### **Current Veterinary Needs**

There are approximately 725 veterinary facilities across Oregon that provide important service to companion animals and livestock. Of the 60 classified advertisements published in our December newsletter seeking a veterinary associate, 15 (or 25%) of the "help wanted" ads were for a Mixed Animal or Large Animal practice. In fact, Oregon has six federally designated regions with a chronic shortage of veterinarians: Crook, Douglas, Klamath Sherman, Tillamook, and Umatilla counties. This ongoing concern negatively impacts Oregon's agriculture industry, which accounts for approximately 13% of the state's Gross Domestic Product. (Note: The "help wanted" ads are only those brought to our attention; we know of other practices that need a veterinarian but who are advertising through other outlets).

### **Emerging Diseases and Public Health**

Disease threats to Oregonians continue to evolve. This past year and now in the New Year, highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu) has captured the attention of the Animal Health program under the Oregon Department of Agriculture, who has collaborated with the OVDL for diagnostic testing. Once only found in the wild bird population, the H5N1 virus has crossed over to mammals, including cattle and humans. This past December, the laboratory documented the death of a cat in Beaverton from eating a select batch of raw cat food that was infected with the H5N1 virus.

The OVDL is uniquely positioned to address diseases of concern to Oregon's animals, public, and environment. But the laboratory is challenged with chronic insufficient funding and a dated facility.

The OVMA urges your support of House Bill 2167 to help all of us in the broader veterinary profession to help protect and improve the health of our communities, animals – including livestock and wildlife – and the environment.

Sincerely,

**Charles**

Charles Hurty, DVM, CVBP  
President



