



January 22, 2024

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
RE: House Bill 2167

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and Members of the Committee,

Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA) is a 116-year-old farmer-owned, farmer-led cooperative, which is known for the quality of the products we produce and for our commitment to doing right by the land, our farmer families, and the communities in which we serve.

TCCA supports HB 2167, which provides essential funding to the Oregon State University (OSU) College of Veterinary Medicine and the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL). This funding is crucial for addressing the shortage of veterinarians in Oregon's rural areas and bolstering efforts to protect public health, food safety, and animal health.

Veterinary medicine is vital to maintaining public health and biosecurity. With expertise in managing diseases that cross species, such as avian influenza, veterinarians play a critical role in safeguarding food systems and mitigating health risks to humans, animals, and the environment. Tillamook County relies heavily on veterinarians to support animal health, ensure food safety, and manage zoonotic disease risks. The shortage of veterinarians in our county can leave farmers without consistent access to professional care, potentially forcing them to navigate complex animal health issues on their own. This could compromise animal welfare and productivity as well as heighten the risk of disease outbreaks that can threaten both the local economy and public health.

Despite its critical importance, the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine faces significant funding challenges. Ranked 31st out of 33 veterinary colleges



nationwide in state funding, OSU receives only \$3.4 million annually, far below the national average of \$13.4 million. This lack of resources hampers the college's ability to train future veterinarians and conduct essential research to support Oregon's agricultural sector and public health systems.

HB 2167's requested \$10 million for the veterinary teaching hospital and \$3.5 million for the OVDL will address these challenges by expanding diagnostic capabilities, improving disease surveillance, and equipping veterinarians with the skills needed to serve Oregon's diverse communities. The OVDL—the state's only laboratory addressing critical animal and public health concerns—requires this investment to continue its indispensable work in biosecurity and food safety.

By supporting HB 2167, the Legislature can ensure that Oregon remains resilient against emerging health threats while fostering a robust and sustainable agricultural economy. This bill is an investment in the well-being of our state's people, animals, and environment.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Trevor Beltz
Manager, Government Relations & Public Affairs