

George Andrew Abernathy
Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR
abernage@oregonstate.edu
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To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

I am writing in full support of continued and expanded state funding for the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) as outlined in SB 5525.

As a current DVM candidate at the Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine and an infectious disease researcher, I can say with confidence that the OVDL is one of the most valuable educational and scientific assets not only in Oregon, but for the broader veterinary and public health communities across the country.

Since the state's last investment in 2023, I have witnessed the impact of that support in real time. It enabled the lab to expand testing for chronic wasting disease and strengthen surveillance for zoonotic disease, improvements that have meaningfully increased both our diagnostic capacity and our preparedness for emerging threats. But what's equally vital, and maybe less often recognized, is the OVDL's dedication to teaching.

The laboratory has been instrumental in training veterinary students like myself, who will go on to serve not only the state of Oregon, but communities across the country. Their willingness to involve students in active diagnostic work and share their wealth of knowledge in pathology, microbiology, and epidemiology means we are graduating with not just theoretical competence, but real-world diagnostic experience. This is precisely the kind of foundation that builds veterinarians capable of bolstering national disease surveillance systems wherever they practice.

Personally, I am preparing to conduct research on koi herpesvirus and avian influenza, both pathogens with significant implications for animal health, commerce, and public well-being. The OVDL's support, facilities, and mentorship make this kind of student-led work possible. Without their infrastructure and commitment to teaching, opportunities like this would be dramatically more limited.

I strongly urge you to approve the requested \$3.5 million in funding for the 2025 to 2027 biennium. Continued support of the OVDL is not only a direct investment in Oregon's animal and public health, but in the training of professionals who will serve throughout the United States. The return on this investment extends far beyond state lines.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

George Andrew Abernathy
DVM Candidate, Class of 2027
Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine