



**Tuesday, April 22, 2025**

Dear Co-Chair Sollman, Co-chair Ruiz, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

Washington County Health and Human Services supports Senate Bill 5525 and the funding it will provide the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL).

The OVDL plays a critical role in our state's public health system, and its response to zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 and bird flu. I am concerned about challenges the OVDL faces because of its outdated facilities and flagging state support not keeping up with the ever-changing disease threats, like avian flu and chronic wasting disease.

The OVDL is Oregon's One Health laboratory responsible for diagnosing animal diseases across the state, including beloved family pets, agricultural animals that are sources of our livelihoods and Oregon's wildlife.

It is the only diagnostic laboratory in our state accredited by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians and is a member of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network — a collection of laboratories across the country whose mission is dedicated to protecting animal agriculture in the United States.

The OVDL stepped up during the pandemic, pivoting to apply their considerable scientific expertise to address the emergency, rapidly developing the capability to contribute to human testing for COVID-19. In total, scientists at the laboratory performed more than 300,000 COVID-19 tests for the state of Oregon!

Now the lab is on the frontline in the avian flu outbreak that has been so important to our poultry and dairy industry, testing thousands of samples for Oregon and the nation. I urge you to recognize the vital role the OVDL plays in Oregon's animal agriculture, protecting the natural environment, and the health of Oregon's public and the animals in our lives and step up to support their work protecting Oregon from emerging zoonotic disease and chronic wasting disease.

Respectfully,

Mjere Simantel, MSW

**Department of Health and Human Services • Director's Office**

155 N. First Avenue, Suite 170, MS 23, Hillsboro, OR 97124-3072

phone: 503-846-4402 • fax: 503-846-4490

email: [HHSInfo@washingtonty.or.gov](mailto:HHSInfo@washingtonty.or.gov) • website: [www.washingtonty.or.gov](http://www.washingtonty.or.gov)