

Subject: The Oregon National Primate Center at OHSU must remain open

Dear Governor Kotek,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Oregon National Primate Research Center (ONPRC) and to urge you to reject misinformation that threatens this critical research institution.

Recently, false claims by groups like the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) have distorted the reality of ONPRC's work and its commitment to both scientific progress and animal welfare. These attacks not only misrepresent the facts, but also endanger the future of medical innovation, public health, and compassionate animal care.

As the spouse of an ONPRC employee and a friend to other ONPRC employees, and therefore as someone who is more familiar with ONPRC operations than those belonging to the PCRM, I can say that ONPRC upholds the highest animal welfare standards. Animal research is often misunderstood, but the reality is simple: this work is a mission of love—for people and animals alike. Researchers, veterinarians, and animal care teams dedicate their lives to advancing medicine, ensuring the highest ethical standards, and protecting both human and animal health.

Veterinary technicians and animal care teams form deep bonds with the animals they work with, providing them with enrichment, comfort, and the best possible care. Veterinarians and animal care professionals at ONPRC provide around-the-clock care, enrichment, and medical attention, ensuring that all animals receive humane and ethical treatment.

I have yet to meet a vet, vet tech, or animal care team who doesn't love animals. Seeing this close up, via my personal acquaintance with employees of ONPRC makes it especially, painfully clear that the campaign being operated by PCRM is unethical and insidious. There are honest and reasonable ways to object to animal testing practices, but the distortion, bad-faith framing, and outright fabrication on display in the present campaign calls into question whether PCRM is concerned about animal welfare at all.

On the topic of "honest and reasonable ways to object to animal testing practices": while scientific advancements have introduced alternative models, no technology fully replicates the complexity of a living system. Primate research remains critical for studying conditions such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, infectious diseases, and reproductive health—areas where animal-free methods cannot yet provide complete answers.

The public demands new medicines, vaccines, and therapies—but those advancements do not happen without ethical research, including necessary animal studies. We live in a world of scientific reality, where new treatments and cures require rigorous study before they are safe for people or animals.

ONPRC has contributed to breakthrough medical discoveries that have improved and saved millions of lives. For example:

- Vaccines & Infectious Disease Research: ONPRC studies were key to the development of COVID-19, Zika, and HIV treatments.
- Neurological Disorders: ONPRC research has advanced treatments for multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease.
- Cancer Therapies: Studies at ONPRC have led to new cancer drugs and improved radiation therapies.

ONPRC is not just an Oregon institution—it is a national leader in biomedical research, driving medical innovation across the country. Restricting or closing ONPRC would mean (1) A loss of life-saving research that directly impacts millions of patients. (2) A blow to Oregon's economy: ONPRC supports thousands of jobs and generates millions in federal research funding. (3) A shift of research to countries with weaker animal welfare regulations, rather than maintaining strong ethical oversight in the U.S.

As for my personal experience with animal research and exceptional animal care, I have already shared with you that my spouse is an employee of ONPRC, and I am fortunate enough to call myself friends with other employees of ONPRC. Through interacting personally with these wonderful people who do wonderful work and taking the time to tour their facilities myself, I can say that it is beyond doubt that the employees of ONPRC think deeply about the ethical dimensions of animal research and do their utmost to ensure that the animals receive the best care that they possibly can. Those involved with PCRM—only a small percentage of whom are actually physicians, and, I would wager, even fewer have taken the time to interact directly with ONPRC and its employees—are wholly unfit to be steering the present discussion on ONPRC and the state of its operations. Frankly, Governor Kotek, I find it deeply troubling that you have been influenced by such a group to the extent that it seems you have. As one of your constituents, I had hoped I could expect more from a public official, and I sincerely hope you will give me and many others reason to renew that hope.

Governor Kotek, I urge you to stand with science, ethics, and progress. Please publicly support ONPRC, and reject the misleading attacks that threaten both Oregon's research leadership and the future of medical innovation. Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to facts, animal welfare and compassion, and Oregon's place as a leader in medical innovation.

Sincerely,
Jonah Sandford