

April 14, 2025

**The Honorable Tina Kotek**

Governor of Oregon  
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254  
Salem, OR 97301

**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.

**Setting the Record Straight: Why ONPRC must remain open**

**False Claim #1:** ONPRC mistreats animals.

**Fact:** ONPRC upholds **the highest animal welfare standards**, exceeding the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and USDA oversight. 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 worked in non-human primate biomedical research for over 40 years at Louisiana State University, the University of Washington and the Tulane National Primate Research Center and I have yet to meet a vet, vet tech, or animal care team who doesn't love animals. Vets have told me personally that prefer working in animal research to private practice because animals in research are better take care of than many pets.

**False Claim #2:** Primate research is outdated and unnecessary.

**Fact:** 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.

**False Claim #3:** ONPRC research is wasteful and doesn't benefit human health.

**Fact:** 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**.

### **Why This Matters—For Oregon and Beyond**

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:

- **A loss of life-saving research** that directly impacts millions of patients.
- **A blow to Oregon's economy**—ONPRC supports **thousands of jobs** and generates millions in federal research funding.
- **A shift of research to countries with weaker animal welfare regulations**, rather than maintaining strong ethical oversight in the U.S.

### **Why I'm Writing, Even from Outside Oregon**

While I may not be an Oregon resident, I recognize that **the work done at ONPRC affects public health, medical innovation, and patient care nationwide. If ONPRC's work is restricted, Americans everywhere will feel the impact**—fewer medical breakthroughs,

slower development of life-saving therapies, and weakened U.S. leadership in biomedical research.

### **My Personal Experience with Animal Research and Exceptional Animal Care**

**With over 40 years of experience non-human primate biomedical research, I can attest to the continuous improvements in animal care, animal enrichment and refinements in animal research. Make no mistake about it, biomedical research is a National Priority that affects the lives of all Americans. Biomedical research today will save lives tomorrow. The United States was able to develop a vaccine for Covid-19 in record time because we were prepared for just such an emergency. Years of basic research on viruses like SARs using animal research models helped scientist create vaccines and treatments that saved the lives of thousands of Americans.**

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,

**Mark A. Murchison MA, ALAT**

**Tulane National Primate Research Center**

**Division of Veterinary Medicine**

**Covington, LA 70433**

**mmurchis@tulane.edu**