

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) at OHSU, and to urge you to reject the misinformation that threatens this vital institution. As a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) and someone with a background in basic science research using animal models to study human disease, I have witnessed firsthand the importance of ethical, evidence-based research in advancing both medical science and human health.

Recently, false claims by groups such as the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) have misrepresented the critical work being done at ONPRC. These attacks have cast a shadow on the integrity of the research community and risk undermining future breakthroughs that could save countless lives. I believe it is essential to set the record straight regarding the value of the work done at ONPRC and the ethical standards upheld in their research.

Setting the Record Straight: Why ONPRC Must Remain Open

False Claim #1: ONPRC mistreats animals.

Fact: ONPRC upholds the highest standards of animal welfare, exceeding the rigorous requirements set forth by the Animal Welfare Act and USDA oversight. The staff at ONPRC, including veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and animal care teams, are deeply committed to the ethical treatment of animals. I have personally seen how these professionals form close bonds with the animals they care for, ensuring that their well-being is prioritized. As a researcher, I know that animal care teams often provide more attention and comfort to research animals than many household pets receive.

False Claim #2: Primate research is outdated and unnecessary.

Fact: While alternative models have advanced, they do not fully replicate the complexity of living systems, particularly for conditions like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, infectious diseases, and reproductive health. In my own work as a nurse practitioner and researcher, I have seen how critical it is to have robust, scientifically valid animal models to understand these complex diseases and develop effective treatments. Primate research remains indispensable to our understanding of these conditions, and this research is vital for advancing new therapies and vaccines.

False Claim #3: ONPRC research is wasteful and does not benefit human health.

Fact: ONPRC has contributed to numerous groundbreaking medical advancements, including the development of vaccines for diseases like COVID-19 and Zika, as well as treatments for HIV and cancer. The research conducted at ONPRC has helped shape the treatment protocols for neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease. Without ONPRC's contributions, these life-saving advancements would not have been possible.

Why This Matters—For Oregon and Beyond

ONPRC is a national leader in biomedical research. Closing or restricting its operations would not only be a blow to Oregon's economy, as it supports thousands of jobs and generates millions of dollars in federal research funding, but it would also significantly hinder medical innovation across the country. This decision would mean fewer treatments and therapies for the millions of Americans affected by neurological disorders, infectious diseases, and other health challenges.

My Personal Experience with Animal Research and Exceptional Animal Care

In my own experience as both a clinician and a researcher, I have seen how animal models are essential for advancing our understanding of complex diseases, particularly those that affect the brain and nervous system. In my past work with animal models of human disease, I have had the privilege of observing the profound care and respect with which animals are treated. I have seen firsthand the ethical and compassionate approach taken by animal researchers, who are dedicated to ensuring that the animals used in studies are treated with the utmost care and respect.

Additionally, as a psychiatric nurse practitioner, I can speak to the critical role of animal research in advancing the understanding of mental health conditions. The models used in neuroscience and psychiatric research have led to breakthroughs in treatment options for disorders like depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia—disorders that many of my patients struggle with on a daily basis. Without continued research in this area, the progress we have made in treating these conditions would be at risk.

Governor Kotek, I urge you to stand with science, ethics, and progress by supporting the continued operation of ONPRC. The institution plays a crucial role in advancing medical science and improving public health, both in Oregon and across the country. Please reject the misleading attacks against ONPRC and help ensure that this important work can continue.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to both facts and compassion, and I trust that you will make a decision that will benefit both Oregon and the world at large.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annie Hood', written in a cursive style.

Annie Hood, PMHNP-BC
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
Sunstone Psychiatric, LLC