



*Prepared by  
Legislative Policy and  
Research Office*

**Report Pursuant to House  
Bill 4128 (2022)**

**Monitoring, Preventing, and  
Responding to Zoonotic  
Diseases in Oregon**

December 2022

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Report Mandate

[House Bill \(HB\) 4128](#), signed into law on March 2, 2022, directs the Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO) to prepare a report evaluating “Oregon’s current framework for monitoring, preventing, and responding to zoonotic diseases” and identify options to strengthen the framework. HB 4128 directs LPRO to consult with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the Oregon State Police (OSP), the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) as well as others with relevant expertise to carry out this work. The Act requires LPRO to submit the resulting report to a committee or interim committee of the Legislative Assembly related to public health by December 31, 2022.

## Background

*Zoonotic diseases*, also known as *zoonoses*, are diseases or infections that can spread between animals and humans. Zoonotic diseases have been recognized as being a primary cause of disease and infection in humans and may cause economic and social concerns. Studies have shown that zoonotic diseases with an animal origin have caused ~60 percent of emerging infectious diseases in humans over the past several decades and ~72 percent of these diseases originated in wildlife.

## Process

LPRO consulted with staff from state agencies—ODA, ODFW, OHA, and OSP—to evaluate current activities related to monitoring, preventing, and responding to zoonotic diseases in the state. Agencies were asked to identify liaisons to work with LPRO, who coordinated completion of a questionnaire to evaluate existing related activities. Following completion of the questionnaire, LPRO arranged follow-up interviews with agency staff. In addition, LPRO conducted interviews with four stakeholders to gain additional perspective on zoonotic diseases responses in the state.

## Current Framework

Multiple state agencies undertake activities to address zoonotic diseases in the state. These agencies may undertake these activities independently, in coordination with other state agencies, or with nonstate entities, including comparable staff from neighboring states and the federal government. As reported in agency questionnaires and follow up interviews with agency staff, current efforts to address zoonotic diseases include:

- ODA—directly or indirectly—is tasked with regulating zoonotic diseases or their carriers in livestock and other domesticated animals, including by carrying out activities related to zoonotic disease monitoring, prevention, response, or enforcement;
- ODFW regulates the management of and response to all diseases occurring in wildlife that may pose a threat to wildlife populations, may affect livestock, or could cause zoonotic diseases in humans, and in some cases, ODFW may control human access to wildlife to prevent reverse zoonoses (i.e., the transmission of zoonotic diseases back to an animal);

- OHA is primarily focused on zoonotic diseases after transmission to humans has occurred. OHA also carries out activities to prevent and control zoonotic diseases through various monitoring, prevention, response, or enforcement activities, including related to vector management; and
- OSP Fish and Wildlife Division's role in regulating zoonotic diseases is primarily through enforcement, including the enforcement of statutes and rules adopted by ODA and ODFW where there is an associated criminal or violation-level penalty.

From information provided by agency staff and stakeholders, LPRO was led to understand that agencies typically respond well to zoonotic disease outbreaks, adequately and quickly communicate with stakeholders, and have working relationships with corresponding staff in neighboring states and the federal government. However, it was unclear to what extent agencies have the capacity and resources to focus on emerging threats related to zoonotic diseases, such as increasing wildland-urban interface, habitat loss and degradation, and climate change.

### **Framework Strengthening Opportunities**

LPRO identified several potential policy options related to monitoring, preventing, and responding to zoonotic diseases based on the findings from research conducted to develop this report. LPRO does not have a position on the policy options provided below and inclusion does not represent endorsement. Further, none of the agencies interviewed asked for new or additional authority or specified additional resources needed to allow the agency to further address zoonotic diseases in the state.

Potential policy opportunities identified through communication with agency liaisons and stakeholders, include:

- clarifying or updating statutory authorities related to zoonotic diseases;
- improving communication and coordination between state agencies and also between state agencies, stakeholders, the public, and nonstate entities;
- addressing agency resource needs to allow for additional efforts related to zoonotic diseases; and
- investing in the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

### **Access to Full Report**

The full report can be found online on the Oregon State Legislature's Publications and Reports website

([https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen\\_engagement/Pages/Publications-Reports.aspx](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Pages/Publications-Reports.aspx)).