



Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
1320 Capitol Street NE, Suite 160
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 971-599-5269

SB 103 & 104 TESTIMONY

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

SENATOR MICHAEL DEMBROW, CHAIR

March 21, 2019

Entered into the Record by
Tami Kerr, Executive Director
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association

Chair Dembrow and Committee members, my name is Tami Kerr and I am the Executive Director for the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, I offer the following testimony on behalf of the 200+ dairy producers of Oregon. These multi-generational conventional and organic Grade A farm families are proud of the care they provide to their animals, are proud of the high-quality milk they produce every day, and our producers are proud of their care of the environment.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association urges you to oppose Senate Bills 103 and 104. My family are dairy farmers in Tillamook. My sister and brother are 4th generation dairy producers. I am actively involved in our farm and I am extremely offended by these bills. Our producers across the state are all family businesses. Some are small and some are very large, but all are family businesses. When I visit farms, and even my own families farm, there are often two and three generations that are working together on their family business. These are not industrial operations and should not lose their Right to Farm protection.

In Oregon, we have very high standards for our dairy producers. I want to start by addressing the recommendation of a Task Force on Dairy Animal Welfare and why it isn't needed. Oregon is a National leader in milk quality. Healthy, happy cows produce high quality milk. Animal care and animal welfare are the top priorities for every dairy farmer. If cows are not well cared for, they produce less milk and the quality suffers. We are regulated

under the PMO – Pasteurized Milk Ordinance and the National FARM Program. Individual processors also have inspections and additional requirements. More than 98% of the U.S. milk supply comes from participating farms in the FARM Animal Care Program. FARM stands for Farmers Assuring Responsible Management. Through the four program silos – Animal Care, Environmental Stewardship, Antibiotic Stewardship and Workforce Development – FARM works with dairy farmers, cooperatives, processors and industry partners to show customers and consumers that the dairy industry holds itself to the highest standards.

The Animal Care Program is the cornerstone FARM Program in which all producers are required to participate. It includes a FARM Animal Care Reference manual with best practices that farmers must follow for every cow and calf on the farm, on-farm assessments by trained evaluators and third-party verification by a qualified third-party entity who evaluates farms each year to ensure the integrity of the program.

Threemile Canyon Farms, the largest dairy farm in the state, was the first farm in the nation to receive a perfect 100% score on their Animal Care evaluation. More oversight and additional regulations of animal welfare is not needed on our dairy farms.

Our multi-generational conventional and organic Grade A dairy farm families work hard 24-7, 365 days a year. The number of Oregon Dairies is directly related to the ability of each farm to withstand the volatility in the price of milk against the cost of feed, labor, and the ever-changing regulatory burden from the state and federal levels. Milk prices have been decreasing each year for the last four years. Our producers are receiving 40% less for their milk than they were five years ago. Nearly every producer in the state is losing money with EVERY shipment of milk. Milk prices historically shift up and down but I have never experienced a continued four year downward shift like we are currently enduring.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association (ODFA) was founded in 1892 to work on behalf of Oregon dairy farmers. We strive to create an atmosphere that is conducive for all Oregon dairy producers. These farms are extremely diverse family businesses. Some are very small

and others are large, some are organic (nearly 20%) and others conventional but all are family businesses and all Grade A dairy farms are regulated by the CAFO program.

ODFA supports the long-standing CAFO program that is regulated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture for the purpose of ensuring the ongoing quality of water in the state. For a historical perspective, the CAFO Program has been in place in Oregon for the past 25 years. Oregon is the only State to require both a CAFO Permit and an Animal Waste Management Permit (AWMP) for all Grade A producers. By comparison, the state of Washington has more than double the number of cows than we do and fewer than 20 dairy farms in Washington have CAFO permits. We consider the manure produced by our animals to be a nutrient. Every time our producers apply nutrients to their fields, they are required to record the date, rate of application, and method of application. They must test the nutrient, take soil samples and make applications at an agronomic rate for the crop they are growing. Dairy farmers are also required to complete an annual report. Producers are inspected at least once every ten months by ODA CAFO inspectors and more frequently for larger farms.

Also for the record, there have been statements about the number of dairy farms that have closed in the last 20 years. When we discuss the number of dairy farms in Oregon, we use the number of farms that have Grade A licenses from the Oregon Department of Agriculture. In 1998, there were 326 Grade A dairy farms. In 2018, there were 210 Grade A dairy farms. Oregon lost 116 farms in the last 20 years, that averages 5.8 farms per year. In the early 1990's, there were 500 dairy farms in the state. With the implementation of the CAFO program, the closure of Grade B dairy farms and other factors, many producers decided they either couldn't make the required investment or chose not to and closed.

A diagram we submitted outlines the number of State and Federal Regulations our producers operate under. These regulations come with a cost and for the record let me reiterate, the cost of compliance is expensive and time consuming. Our producers don't need additional regulations.

In Oregon, about 45 of our 210 dairy farms that are classified as a Large under the CAFO program. They are often inspected on a more frequent basis than smaller farms and have a

high compliance rate. Some of these farms pasture their cows but most use their land to grow feed for their animals.

They are family businesses, not industrial businesses and should not lose their Right to Farm protection. The dairy industry continues to adapt best management practices as new research becomes available.

Thanks for your time and attention. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.