LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OREGON

April 1, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
    Senator Lee Beyer, Chair

Re: **SB 583** - Relating to industrial dairies; declaring an emergency - **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports SB 583, based on our positions regarding climate change, air quality, water quality, and agriculture. The League's agriculture policy position is especially relevant to this bill, stating that "clean air and water regulations should apply to all animal and agriculture production and processing facilities, including and not limited to large-scale concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs)." We concur with the premise of the bill that a moratorium should be placed on industrial dairies in Oregon until the environmental and health impacts are thoroughly studied.

In the last 24 years Oregon has seen an increase in large dairy farms, but mega-dairies with over 2500 cows are fairly new to the scene. The detrimental impact of these large-scale operations received widespread attention in 2018, when Lost Valley Farms Dairy in Boardman was charged with violating environmental rules more than 200 times in a year and a half, polluting the air and drinking water of the surrounding area. The following year, Hogan Dairy Farms in Tillamook was cited after its manure digester malfunctioned, causing 30,000 to 40,000 gallons of waste to overflow from an effluent control pond into a ditch that flows to Holquartin Slough. Legislative attempts to enforce a moratorium on mega-dairies unfortunately failed in 2019. Thus, SB 583 is a second attempt to enforce a moratorium and declare an emergency until the true impacts of mega-dairies have been thoroughly studied.

Research on the environmental and health impacts associated with the raising of livestock is ongoing, but we do know there are critically important reasons to be concerned about the impacts of large-scale dairies on climate change and public health. Each year, a single cow will belch about 220 pounds of methane. While methane from cattle is shorter lived than carbon dioxide, it is thought to be 28 times more potent in warming the atmosphere and more damaging than auto emissions. The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that, in addition to methane, "the storing of large quantities of manure on factory farms could cause emissions of unsafe quantities of ammonia, hydrogen sulfate, particulate matter, and odors." Workers in these facilities experience high levels of asthma-like symptoms, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases. This is especially concerning in today's world, when COVID-19 is proving deadly to those with weakened immune systems and respiratory issues.

The long-term effects of CAFO waste on water quality is especially concerning. A 2018 OPB report stated: "Excessive nitrates in drinking water can cause health problems for senior citizens, young children and people with immune issues." Pathogens such as E. coli, cryptosporidium, and salmonella can also be present. Nutrients in the waste material often cause bright-green algae blooms in ditches, streams, and lakes. As these surface-water algae blooms die off, the oxygen in the water is depleted, leading to fish kills. Additionally, drinking-water plants must remove these nutrients before water is fit for consumption.

The League believes this issue warrants the declaration of an emergency, and we urge you to pass SB 583 out of committee with a do-pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

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