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SB 583: Anti-Farm and Anti-Business

Oregon's dairy farmers work hard to be good stewards of the environment and good neighbors within their communities. These families keep an important agricultural heritage alive, contribute to the local and statewide economy, and earn Oregon national and international acclaim for high-quality dairy products.

SB 583 is an unnecessary and punitive bill directed at Oregon's already struggling dairy industry, trying to survive amidst record-low milk prices, a global pandemic that upended markets, and natural disasters from wildfires to ice storms. This bill would put dozens of Oregon's family farms out of business. It would NOT help small family farms.

SB 583 would ban dairies that have more than 2,500 cows by stating that the state cannot issue new CAFO permits or renew permits for operations over that size. SB 583 would require the downsizing or closure of dozens of Oregon's existing dairies, many of which are family operated and have been in their families for generations.

SB 583 is bad policy for Oregon agriculture, and we strongly urge your opposition.

Oregon Farms Should be Judged by Stewardship, Not Size. As with any other industry, a dairy's size is no indicator of its commitment to environmental stewardship or dedication to animal welfare. A farm's management and efforts to preserve the land, water, and air quality, and protect animal health, determine its sustainability much more than its size. In fact, the larger the dairy farm, the more scrutiny it receives from both regulators and the local community. It's new hobby farmers who are more likely to not be out of compliance with the myriad laws governing dairies; in fact, most of the water quality violations the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture finds through its water quality program are from hobby farmers.

Oregon's Dairy Farmers Do Their Part to Protect the Environment and Care for Animals.

Oregon's dairy farmers are some of the most forward-thinking in the nation. They were at the front of the curve in voluntarily coming under the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) program in the 1970s and have continued to build on their record of environmental stewardship since then. Oregon dairies also do not harm air quality. Close government monitoring consistently shows that the majority of Oregon has outstanding air quality year-round. In areas where there are isolated issues, it's primarily due to woodstove smoke and urban emissions, not

animal agriculture. Studies have shown that there are not negative health effects associated with working on a dairy. Dairies are safe to work on, and they are safe for their communities.

How do Oregon dairies assure that they meet the highest standards? Over 98% of dairy producers participate in the National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program. The FARM Program works with dairy farmers, the agriculture community, and industry partners to show customers and consumers how dairies take the very best care of cows and the environment; produces safe, wholesome milk; and adheres to the highest standards of workforce development.

Bills Target Existing, Family-Scale Dairies. The dairy farms that would be most impacted by the bills are largely family owned and operated and have been for generations. With milk prices at an all-time low and regulatory burdens at an all-time high, dairies today must often have more cows and produce more milk in order to remain viable and support all family members involved.

SB 583 is based on the false premise that Oregon is going to become a haven for large, out-of-state dairies moving in. But realistically, with the amount of red tape, regulatory hurdles, resources it takes to open a new dairy in Oregon, particularly a large one, this will not come to pass. Fostering in-state dairies should be the legislature's goal. SB 583 does the exact opposite.

SB 583 Undermines Oregon's Land Use Planning System. All Oregon's dairies are located on lands zoned for Exclusive Farm Use (EFU), and require a significant amount of farmland to grow the crops needed to support the dairy. Because these bills would require the closure or downsizing of these dairies, this bill would not only jeopardize the family farm, the animals, and the rural landscape, it would also mean the land could easily be converted to truly industrial, non-farm uses.

This would create the patchwork of designations within a farm zone, undermining exactly what Oregon's land use planning system seeks to avoid. Oregon needs to preserve our farmland, not pave it over.

The Bills Would Set a Dangerous Precedent for Agriculture. As soon as the state starts to dictate what size, scale, and type of farms are allowed in Oregon, it undermines farmers' ability to evolve. Farmers and ranchers survive for generations because they're able to adapt to market pressures, respond to consumer trends, and explore new technologies. This can mean experimenting with different crops and farming methods, vertically integrating into different product offerings, and/or expanding the operation. Farms need to the ability to adapt, diversify, and grow in order to remain viable.

We are also concerned that as drafted, the bill defines "industrial dairy" as any operation with more than 2,500 cows, apparently not distinguishing between beef and dairy cows. While bad policy even if it just targets the dairy industry, the bill is also poorly drafted and could have a much broader impact than intended.

Oregon's farms and ranches support rural communities, protect wildlife habitat and water quality, and preserve open space. The restrictions threatened by SB 583 would put all of Oregon agriculture at risk. **We urge your opposition.**

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