



April 1, 2021

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for Senate Bill 583

Dear Chair Beyer, Vice Chair Findley, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity and our over 1.7 million members and supporters, including members in Oregon, I respectfully submit the following testimony in **support of Senate Bill 583.**

The Center is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the protection of wildlife and plants hovering on the brink of extinction, the clean air and water they need to survive, and the health and welfare of generations to come. In furtherance of that mission, the Center advocates against unsustainable industrial agricultural practices and for sustainable agricultural solutions. While the Center is a national organization, one of its largest offices is located in Portland, Oregon, and many of the Pacific Northwest species that it advocates for, including iconic species such as Pacific salmon and steelhead, are put at risk by the continued, unmitigated growth of the industrial dairy industry in Oregon.

Over the last twenty years, Oregon has experienced a steep rise in large industrial-scale dairy operations, often referred to as “mega-dairies,” with the average size of a large dairy herd in the state nearly doubling between 1997 and 2012, and the number of dairy cows more than tripling during that same time period. These industrial facilities, which concentrate huge numbers of animals and their wastes in a small geographic area, generate dangerous amounts of air and water pollution, and put enormous demands on Oregon’s water resources—negatively affecting wildlife and the habitats that they need to survive.

SB 583 would place a moratorium on industrial-scale dairies of 2,500 cows or more “until the impacts of industrial dairies, including impacts to air quality, climate, water quality, water supplies, small- and medium-sized dairies, community and worker health and animal welfare, have been adequately studied and addressed through laws and rules.”

Center supports this moratorium because it will give legislators and regulators a much-needed opportunity to stop, evaluate the public health, economic, animal welfare, and environmental impacts of large industrial dairies in Oregon, and establish important protections for Oregon’s farm communities, wildlife, and natural resources. In short, SB 583 will help independent family farmers by rebalancing fair and competitive markets, while also establishing a common-sense

approach to protecting the health of rural communities and the environment by addressing the significant pollution problems caused by these large industrial operations.

Passage of SB 583 will also demonstrate strong climate leadership by the Oregon legislature. It is well documented that industrial-scale mega-dairies are significant drivers of climate change. In relation to the climate crisis, animal agriculture is understood to produce between 10 and 25 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions—a majority of which are the greenhouse gases methane and nitrous oxide.¹ Methane and nitrous oxide are of particular concern not only because of the large amounts released by industrial animal operations, but also because of their potent warming potential when compared to carbon dioxide. (Methane has more than 20 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide, while nitrous oxide has *nearly 300 times* the atmospheric warming potential of carbon dioxide.) Curbing the effects of climate demands action in which the agricultural sector is required to shoulder its fair share of greenhouse gas accountability alongside the energy and transportation sectors.

The current extinction crisis is entirely of our own making. More than a century of habitat destruction, pollution, the spread of invasive species, climate change, and other human activities have pushed nature to the brink. Addressing the extinction crisis will require leadership — especially from Oregon — alongside bold, courageous, far-reaching initiatives that attack this emergency at its root. The Center supports this bill because it does just that.

In sum, industrial mega-dairies can cause significant water and air pollution, contribute to climate change, and harm local communities and small family farmers. For all these reasons, we respectfully ask that the members of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee **support the passage of SB 583**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

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¹ United National Environment Programme, *Growing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Due to Meat Production*, 4 (Oct. 2012); see also Gerber, P.J., et al., *Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock – A Global Assessment of Emissions and Mitigation Opportunities*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, xii (2013); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options*, xxi (2006), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM>.