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TESTIMONY

SB 583 – Prohibits DEQ and ODA from Issuing or Renewing License or Permit Senate Energy and Environment Committee

Senators Beyer, Findley, Dembrow, Robinson and Taylor:

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association respectfully offers testimony in opposition to SB 583.

Beef ranks in the top five commodities year over year for Oregon's agricultural production and economic contribution. According to the most recent agricultural census Oregon is home to more than 1.3 million cattle raised by 13,000 ranch families who ranch in every Oregon county. Oregon is well known for its high value and top quality agriculture and livestock. It is often said, what we do really well in Oregon is grow food and fiber for our State, Country and the rest of the World. At the same time, our ranchers, feedlots and auction yards are critical components of our rural and frontier economy. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association was formed in 1913 to serve Oregon's ranchers and continues in this mission of service today.

SB 583 as drafted captures all Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) permit holders with 2,500 or more livestock. As per the Oregon Department of Agriculture's records there are more than 100 livestock (non dairy) operations that fall into this category. While the OCA has no interest in bifurcating the livestock industry, it is important for this Committee to understand and appreciate the potential far-reaching impact of SB 583 should it become policy. Regardless of how this bill is positioned, it unnecessarily threatens the growth or investment in new feedlots in our state – an important tool in getting high-quality protein to market. As a matter of fact, Oregon's dairy producers are equally important to the OCA because the bull calves produced at a dairy farm are sold into the cattle industry to be raised for beef.

SB 583 and the testimony the Committee heard is founded on two false premises. First, that livestock production is inhumane or unsustainable. Our members strive every day to ensure working lands across Oregon are preserved and enhanced for ecological benefits. Ranchers are restoring streams, protecting water quality, sequestering carbon and implementing cutting edge grazing practices. They care deeply for their animals, their health and well-being. Secondly, there is no evidence that larger CAFO's present any problems based solely on size (which the bill attempts to restrict). Larger feedlots allow economies of scale, reducing waste, duplication, and therefore getting food to tables cheaper. That helps our ranchers and families in Oregon and beyond.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association opposes SB 583 and will oppose arbitrary restrictions on highly regulated, compliant operators.

Thank you for your willingness to acknowledge this testimony. I am available for questions.

Respectfully,

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