

*Written Testimony in support of Senate Bill 85, which would enact a moratorium on new and expanding industrial confined animal feeding operations and would require the Oregon Department of Agriculture to report the impacts of industrial CAFOs to air quality, climate, water quality, water supplies, small- and medium-sized livestock farms, community and worker health, and animal welfare.*

It is imperative that we understand, fully, the effects of industrial confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). For that reason, I am supporting the moratorium on new and expanding CAFOs to provide the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) the opportunity to study the impacts of industrial CAFOs.

From an economic perspective, we must recognize the dangers of corporate-controlled agriculture – and the importance of small farms to promote sustainable economic development – to rural communities. Experience in other states, such as North Carolina, has demonstrated that corporate-controlled industrial CAFOs can have disastrous economic consequences on rural areas. These operations often prioritize short-term profits over long-term sustainability, and siphon money to out-of-state corporations. As a result, these operations rob small communities of environmental safety, health, and economic stability. In contrast, small farms prioritize sustainable agriculture practices that are beneficial to the environment, public health, and the local economy. These operations can provide a range of economic opportunities for local residents, such as direct sales to consumers, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture programs. They also foster economic diversity, resilience, and innovation by promoting collaboration among local businesses and supporting the development of niche markets.

From a health perspective, we must also recognize the dangers of factory farms to the environment and the health of rural communities. The overuse of pesticides and fertilizers can pollute our rivers and lakes, killing fish and other aquatic life. CAFO pollution in ground and surface water can contribute to high nitrate contamination in wells that make the water in nearby homes undrinkable. Factory farms can also contribute to air pollution, which can affect the health of nearby communities. Two examples: (1) the release of ammonia and other gasses from animal waste can cause respiratory problems and other health issues; and (2) exposure to pollution from factory farms can cause serious long-term health issues for young children, including developmental delays, cognitive impairments, and chronic respiratory illnesses. On the flip side, CAFOs produce nothing positive for the environment and the health of neighboring rural communities.

I believe it is our responsibility to take care of the land and the people of Oregon. We cannot blindly continue to prioritize profits over the well-being of our state and its inhabitants. We need to understand the effect of CAFOs in Oregon fully to avoid the destruction of economies, environment and health of our rural economies – and for that reason, I support SB85.