

March 15, 2023

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 85, Relating to Moratorium on Approval of Tier 2 CAFOs

Chair Golden, and Members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee:

I write to urge the Senate Natural Resources Committee to support SB 85 for a moratorium on factory farms in Oregon. As the bill states, “it is in the best interest of Oregonians to prohibit the proliferation of industrial confined animal feeding operations until the impacts of industrial confined animal feeding operations, including impacts to air quality, climate, water quality, water supplies, small- and medium-sized livestock farms, community and worker health and animal welfare, have been adequately studied and addressed through laws and rules.”

This bill establishing a moratorium on granting permits for both new and expanded industrial concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) requires the Dept. of Agriculture to 1) issue an evidence-based report assessing all of the impacts described in Section 1, and recommendations of rules or laws that will be needed that have a high probability of ensuring that any significantly adverse impacts described in Section 1 would be prevented. The report should include a recommended timeline for implementing the recommended laws and rules that are needed to ensure the prevention of adverse impacts stated in Section 1 of this bill as quoted in paragraph one above; and 2) report summaries of best practices in other jurisdictions for preventing adverse impacts as described in Section 1, to be submitted on December 1, 2024 and December 1, 2026.

SB 85, Section 1 articulates likely impacts of industrial farm animal production on Oregonians. We have witnessed how climate change can directly, unpredictably, and profoundly affect quality of life, water resources, agriculture, property, natural ecosystems, social cohesion, mental and physical health, biodiversity, extreme weather events, and disease outbreaks. Industrial concentrated animal feeding operations will certainly be vulnerable to many of the effects of climate change, and climate risks to CAFOs should be evaluated and addressed in reports to the Legislature in order to better evaluate whether expanding industrial farm animal production in Oregon is a prudent decision for Oregon’s agriculture and resource future.

Would more CAFOs be beneficial to Oregon? The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production reports this conclusion: “The method of producing food animals in the United States has changed from the extensive system of small and medium-sized farms owned by a single family to a system of large, intensive operations where the animals are housed in large numbers in enclosed structures that resemble industrial buildings more than they do a traditional barn. That change has happened primarily out of view of consumers but has come at a cost to the environment and a negative impact on public health, rural communities, and the health and well-being of the animals themselves.”

Compared to Washington and California, Oregon is less regulated around factory farms, and as a result our state is ground zero for anticipated profitable corporate expansion of industrial farm animal production. Corporate

industrial agriculture has access to big dollars, and it can outbid/outspend smaller farmers for available EFU zoned land and designated High Value Soils, taking them out of food and crop production while damaging soil nutrients. This drives up the price of farmland, shutting out smaller and midsize farmers. According to American Farmland Trust data, the cost per acre of farmland in Oregon increased at the West Coast's highest rate of over 10% between 2020 and 2021. Small and midsize family farmers are being sacrificed to corporate profit-taking.

Another drawback of Tier 2 CAFOs is that smaller meat and dairy farm producers face unfair competition from factory farms in their dwindling ability to readily access critical support networks of USDA meat and milk processor facilities, and trucking, parts, repair and local services. If more factory farms come online, farmers will be increasingly squeezed out of equitable access to crucial services.

Oregon's 100-year old stock water exemption law has afforded factory farms, with their thousands of animals and resources, the right to withdraw millions of gallons of water from aquifers, rivers and groundwater, an abuse to the system, while small and midsize farmers face water insecurity due to drought and the changing climate.

Factory farming's habitual use of antibiotics because of crowded animal living conditions has threatened the viability of these drugs for vital human medicinal use; the practice should be prohibited. Food-borne illness outbreaks and meat recalls dispute the practice of overcrowding animals. Food and Drug Administration Guidance says that "human exposure through the ingestion of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria from animal-derived foods represents the most significant pathway for human exposure to bacteria that has emerged or been selected as a consequence of antimicrobial drug use in animals raised together in confined areas." This has had deadly, ongoing consequential outcomes.

There is growing demand that now absent animal welfare standards should be instituted for industrial farm animal production operations. These deal with animal husbandry practices of good feeding, good housing, good health, appropriate treatment of animals that does not arouse fear, and allowing animals to express their natural, non-harmful social behaviors.

Consider the impact multifold increases of factory farm wastes, air and water pollutants and poisons, greenhouse gas emissions and offensive odors and noises have on nearby farms, forests, recreation areas, businesses and wildlife? On nearby property values? On quality of life of neighboring property owners to safely experience their common rights to health, welfare and happy enjoyment of their homes? Smaller farmers help their neighbors in times of need. But the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production report concluded that large-scale industrialized farms create a variety of divisive social and health problems for communities, a finding that other studies have confirmed. The Pew Commission report is a highly valuable resource for information on the negative and detrimental outcomes resulting from industrial farm animal production.

Think of the "original wealth" Oregon has been blessed with through the ages as capital in our "state bank": soil fertility, clean water, aquifers, clean air, oxygen- and water-producing woodlands, plentiful streams and sunlight. These are some of Oregon's agricultural "capital equity," and how we invest, devalue, withdraw or steward that capital account will impact the state's future capacity to build agricultural and rural societal wealth, e.g., healthy crops, healthy farmworkers and communities, healthy animals, healthy food, sweet air, and fair treatment of people, animals and resources. Permitting more Tier 2 factory farms would devalue and squander those riches. There is no reason to invite them into the Oregon dream.

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I urge you to vote YES to advance SB 85 in this Legislative Session, to protect and support our small and mid-sized socially and ecologically responsible family farms in Oregon.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Valido