

**Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Re: SB 85-1
March 23, 2023**

Greetings Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Theodora Tsongas, an environmental health scientist with a career in public health. I am a member of the Healthy Climate Action Team of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Environmental Justice and the Climate and Health Committees of the American Public Health Association. I am testifying today in favor of SB 85-1, the real factory farm moratorium bill. It has been made toothless by the proposed - 3 amendment and I ask you to please reject the -3 amendment out of hand.

There are many concerns with large confined animal feeding operations, all directly or indirectly health related, that the SB 85-1 moratorium would allow us to address:

- air pollution with methane, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, nitrous oxide, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter**
- ground and surface water pollution with nitrates and other toxic contaminants**
- overdrawn water supplies resulting in low groundwater levels and water scarcity exacerbating drought impacts on communities and farms**
- worker and community health and economic impacts (e.g., water treatment costs imposed on rural communities not industries producing the pollution)**
- overuse of antibiotics contributing to the proliferation of antibiotic resistant bacteria**
- animal mistreatment**
- * Catastrophic climate disruption caused by methane emissions**
- * Exacerbation of air pollution impacts by climate disruption**

SB 85 -1 halts the expansion of existing or addition of new mega-farms until we can adequately address the water and air pollution, climate exacerbation, worker issues, environmental justice, and animal welfare issues that plague the large factory farm operations. There is widespread support for a full freeze on factory farms in Oregon. Despite this, the last minute attempt by industry to destroy the effectiveness of the bill through its -3 amendment, a moratorium applying only to chicken factory farms for only two years will not address the major problems caused by the other large animal feeding facilities, and would barely have time to get off the ground before the moratorium was lifted.

The - 3 amendment would not apply to new mega-dairies like Lost Valley Farm, which racked up over 200 environmental violations in its first year of operating, or the proposed Easterday Farms mega-dairy, which is violating groundwater pollution limits even with no animals yet on site. Furthermore, ruminants (dairy and beef cattle) produce methane through normal digestion and large confined animal feeding operations emit large amounts of methane, contributing significantly to climate disruption. This is simply not sustainable.

In 2019, the American Public Health Association published its policy “Precautionary Moratorium on New and Expanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations” stating that despite “the growing evidence that CAFOs pose health and environmental risks and negatively impact workers and communities, CAFO regulations and their enforcement have failed to adequately protect human health and the environment”, and called for “a moratorium on the establishment of new

CAFOs and expansion of existing CAFOs until regulations and enforcement conditions are in place to adequately protect the public's health.” (APHA Policy Number 20194, Nov.05, 2019)

Morrow County, where one of the largest dairies in the country is located, is struggling with low groundwater levels, and with dangerous levels of nitrates in the groundwater that people rely on for drinking water. Drinking water with high nitrate levels is associated with increased risk of thyroid and bladder cancers, birth defects and other serious health problems, especially among pregnant women and infants. The mega-dairies in our state have had disastrous effects on communities' air and water quality, water quantity, they have put dozens of family and midsized farmers out of business. To remove mega-dairies from this crucial legislation would disable any attempt at addressing the problems caused by these large animal feeding operations.

It is high time that we have a true moratorium on these mega-farms so that the adverse health and environmental impacts of large confined animal feeding operations on our communities can be reduced and prevented in the future, and the public health protected.

At the same time, we are faced with an emergency: Catastrophic climate disruption needs a rapid and effective response. The United Nations announcement this week urged us again that we have very little time (8 years or less) to make significant reductions in our emissions of greenhouse gases, specifically methane and carbon dioxide, to prevent exceeding the 1.5 degree celsius tipping point and allow even more radical reductions in the livability of our planet. It is necessary that all of us, all sectors of society participate in a concerted response to the climate emergency and we must cut carbon dioxide and methane emissions everywhere. Large confined animal feeding operations are a major source of methane emissions, and these emissions must be reduced and soon. We all have to do this. There is no real choice because we are all in this together. Please do not abrogate your responsibility as leaders to do your part to protect the lives of Oregonians as well as the planetary systems that make life possible. That is your responsibility in light of the evidence: Oregonians are already facing the extreme debilitating effects on life, health, economy and infrastructure from climate disruption. You know this. Now do something about it!

I urge you to support a moratorium on factory farms that covers the whole state and all types of industrial CAFOs for 8 years (SB 85-1) and to reject the proposed -3 amendment.

Thank you for your hard work and leadership.