

Submitter: Amanda Fox

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2557

Good morning Chair Helm, Chair Owens, and members of the committee. Great to see you again. My name is Amanda Fox, I'm the Executive Director of Animal Rights Initiative. Thank you for the chance to speak in favor of House Bill 2557, to prohibit the manufacture and sale of commercially farmed octopus that will serve to protect our biodiversity and ecosystems for generations to come.

The foundation for this bill began in 2021, when the London School of Economics released 300 studies finding octopuses to be highly intelligent, sentient creatures with an exceptional capacity to comprehend suffering, concluding that high-welfare farming of them would not be possible. This prompted all member states of the United Kingdom to recognize octopuses under their Animal Welfare Act. However in 2022, plans were announced for the world's first octopus farming facility, aiming to intensively confine and process over 1 million octopuses per year.

You might remember in 2017 there was a net pen collapse in Washington that accidentally released almost 300,000 non-native Atlantic salmon into Pacific waters. State legislators were quick to react by not only banning net-pen salmon farming to protect native populations, but also later prohibiting octopus farming in 2024 to avoid repeat catastrophes. Because of their exceptional cognitive abilities, octopuses are known for escaping - making them more likely than any other aquacultured species to spread disease, parasites, and genetic mutations on farms and to wild populations. For example, multiple sources report frequent escape attempts at the Seaside Aquarium, where octopuses are willing to sustain injuries in their pursuits.

Research indicates it takes three to five pounds of crabs and fish to produce a single pound of octopus. Because they can't be fed with soy or corn, it would require the diversion of millions of crabs and fish to be used as feed. Therefore, Oregon octopus farms would pose a compound threat to Oregon's Dungeness crab populations and marine ecosystems.

The vast amount of waste generated from such a resource intensive diet would intensify harmful algal blooms and concentrations of toxins in the water, contaminating fish tissues and requiring more bacteria advisories like we're currently seeing in the Umpqua River, Willow Creek Reservoir, and all over the state.

The phosphorous and nutrient rich waste serves as fertilizer for algae. The bacteria release body heat while eating and metabolizing, and reflect the blue green pond

scum color we're all familiar with. That color absorbs sunlight, further warming the waters, creating a feedback loop of prime conditions for toxic algae to rapidly proliferate.

Oregon's crabbing season has been facing major delays since 2010, and can already only be opened in stages due to high concentrations of toxins found within tissues. We can not simultaneously intensify crabbing while also rapidly accelerating predation, harmful toxin deposits, and warming waters. These exact conditions led to the collapse of the New England Shrimp Fishery, and we run the risk of repeating that here.

In 2019, The Oregon State Legislature voted to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intensively confined hen products, expanding regulations already in place for other farmed animals. Every member of this committee serving that year - Chair Helm, Rep. Marsh, Rep McLain - voted in favor of that reform. Thank you.

House Bill 2557 is the chance to extend similar protections to octopuses, and to align with the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Conservation Strategy to preserve Oregon's natural ecosystems. We are asking for a yes vote. Thank you.