Submitter:	Hugh Mitchell
On Behalf Of:	
Committee:	House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB2965

As an Oregon-licensed veterinarian that does work for public and tribal wild stock enhancement fish hatcheries and private fish culture facilities in Oregon and around North America, I oppose this bill because it appears to be submitted without an exhaustive study of the true impact and cost-benefits of net pens on the marine environment. The ban in WA State was "ramrodded" through with scant scientific evidence, citing issues with eel grass, etc. (the pens were in waters too deep from eel grass and decades of monitoring by independent environmentalists through 4 decades showed little impact). Furthermore, WA State's Department of Natural Resources that pushed the ban through, DID NOT consult with NOAA or the State's other relevant agency: the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Both of these government entities opposed the ban. Also in opposition to the ban were the American Fisheries Society and the American Association of Fish Veterinarians. Poorly sited and managed net pens CAN have a deleterious impact on the environment around them and this will impact the health and productivity of the fish in these pens, so there is tremendous farmer incentive to manage their sites responsibly. Any diseases that the pens pick up come from the wild fish that have been long exposed and are generally immune. In short, given that we have a $20 billion dollar seafood deficit in this country and are falling drastically behind other countries in seafood production, an outright blanket ban for ALL net pens is irresponsible. Net pens should be allowed on a case-by-case basis, but with strict rules that monitor their environmental impact on benthic and surrounding water quality. Unacceptable standards can be set and net pens can be removed if there are violations. This was done in the early stages of net pen production and aquaculturists have learned a considerable amount in the past 4 or 5 decades. Interestingly, net pens are relatively benign in their impact with their main effluent being nitrogenous "fertilizer" - which has been shown to be insignificant compared to all other sources into the ocean (and actually needed for oceanic foodweb productivity in certain amounts). Net pens that have been found to produce excessive waste have been removed and studies have shown that within 6 months, there is absolutely no hint that they were ever there.

In short, net pens are wonderful tools of seafood production and very carbon friendly. They use the ocean's natural biofiltration system and currents and tides to move water (no power-hungry pumps needed). They are literally like 3-dimensional ranch fences and the fish in them (>97% water to fish) are not crowded and swim happily. This is extremely important to farmers because unhappy fish do not grow well and are more susceptible to diseases that wild fish carry. Furthermore, the footprint of a net pen is EXTREMELY miniscule compared to the total intercoastal area. Norway, famous for its pristine and pure fjords, produces over 2 million metric tons of salmon

a year in about 1000 net pens sites along the 16,000-mile coastline. The surface of these pens would easily fit on the tarmac of the Oslo airport. That is efficient low-impact food production.

On a case-by-case basis, the net pen size, location, and species of fish contained should be considered on its own, but an outright ban of this important tool for responsible seafood production is extremely short-sighted and unwise.