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foodandwaterwatch.org

February 26th, 2025

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Food & Water Watch Written Testimony on HB 2965

Co-chairs Helm and Owens, and members of this Committee,

My name is Aimee Stone and I am here today on behalf of Food & Water Watch and our 44k supporters here in Oregon. I urge the committee to support HB 2965 and the new amendment and schedule this bill for a work session.

HB 2965 would ban the use of net pens for industrial aquaculture in our ocean and estuarine waters. Industrial net pen operations lead to significant environmental issues to our water and threaten wild fish populations. Unlike closed systems, net pens discharge enormous amounts of fish feed, feces, pharmaceuticals, and other chemicals into our marine and estuarine waters jeopardizing Oregon's diverse aquatic ecosystems and the local economies that rely on it. A single facility confining several hundred thousand fish can produce over one million pounds of waste annually which has a devastating impact on our ocean waters and puts Oregon's coastal waters and the native species at significant risk.

These operations directly threaten wild fish populations due to net pen malfunctions and massive fish escapes where several thousand farmed, non-native fish enter into our fragile aquatic ecosystem, are inevitable. Farmed fish compete with native species for food and shelter, spark the outbreak of diseases, and place even more stress on native fish populations and the coastal economies that rely on them.

HB 2965 and its amendment does not seek to ban or prevent the growth of aquaculture here in Oregon. Instead it prioritizes sustainable, environmentally-conscious alternatives to the use of net pens that prioritize the health of our oceans and native fish species. Oregon has the opportunity to build on a more sustainable version of aquaculture that would create jobs and economic opportunities without sacrificing our oceans and our aquatic ecosystems. We know the dangers of using net pens in open-waters and we know Oregon can do better than allow this to happen. We urge you to accept HB 2965's new amendment and schedule it for a work session as a commitment to the protection of our waters, local fisheries, and the future of our oceans. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aimee Stone
Oregon Organizer, Food & Water Watch