

April 2, 2025

To: Senate Natural Resources Committee

From: Brooke Helstrom

Re: Support for SB 80- to stop new or expanding large CAFOs in GWMA's

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

My name is Brooke Helstrom, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am a law student at Lewis & Clark law school.

I am writing to you today in support of SB 80. We must take action to halt the expansion of factory farming, defined by the Oregon Department of Agriculture as large CAFOs, in our state's groundwater management areas until contamination is brought down to safe levels.

I care about this bill because it is important to me that all Oregon residents have access to safe drinking water. Nitrate from fertilizers and manure pollutes groundwater and threatens the health of those who drink it. Nitrate contamination in the LUBGWMA continues to get worse in spite of being designated a GWMA 35 years ago. We need mandatory reductions in pollution and to prevent new sources of pollution, including factory farms, from being built in GWMA's in the first place. Well tests in GWMA's show nitrate levels more than 11 times the EPA limit for safe consumption.

Drinking nitrate-laden water can cause severe health problems, particularly in women and infants, such as certain types of cancers, blue baby syndrome, thyroid issues, and other adverse health effects. The large quantities of pollution concentrated on factory farms release airborne particulate matter linked to asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases — nationwide, factory farm air pollution is responsible for more than 12,000 premature deaths every year.

Additionally, factory farms fuel climate change by releasing harmful and dangerous greenhouse gas emissions such as methane and nitrous oxide. One ton of manure from large dairy farms produces more than twice as many greenhouse gas emissions as one ton of manure from small dairy farms due to manure management practices. Large CAFOs rely on unsustainable agricultural practices which produce massive amounts of manure, along with significant methane, ammonia, and nitrous oxide emissions. Shifting to regenerative, sustainable practices would create a resilient food system that prioritizes the health of our environment and our communities.

I urge you to vote for SB 80 to protect our precious water resources!

Sincerely,  
Brooke Helstrom