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

I am writing on behalf of Farm Forward, a national organization with thousands of supporters in Oregon, to express my strong support for SB80, which is currently under consideration. This bill is a crucial step toward addressing the severe public health impacts of pollution from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), particularly water contamination and air pollution.

Nitrate contamination from fertilizers and manure is a growing crisis, threatening the health of Oregonians who rely on groundwater for drinking water. The Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA) has been designated as a contaminated area for 35 years, yet nitrate levels continue to rise. Well tests have shown nitrate levels more than 11 times the EPA limit for safe consumption. Urgent action is needed to prevent further pollution by restricting new CAFOs in these vulnerable areas.

Drinking nitrate-laden water poses severe health risks, particularly for women and infants, increasing the likelihood of certain cancers, thyroid issues, and blue baby syndrome. Additionally, factory farm air pollution releases airborne particulate matter linked to asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory diseases. Nationwide, factory farm emissions are responsible for more than 12,000 premature deaths every year. As a father of two small children I am deeply concerned about the effects of industrial animal farms on the health and wellbeing of young children.

Despite the LUBGWMA's designation in 1990, regulatory agencies have permitted the expansion of large CAFOs, including Oregon's largest mega-dairy and beef feedlot, which collectively house over 160,000 cows. This bill would halt the issuance of new large CAFO permits until the groundwater crisis is properly addressed. The disastrous case of the Lost Valley Mega-Dairy, which accumulated over 200 environmental violations, exemplifies the consequences of lax oversight.

The ongoing bird flu outbreak further underscores the growing public health risks posed by mega-dairies and industrial poultry operations. These large-scale facilities create conditions that facilitate the spread of zoonotic diseases, increasing the likelihood of outbreaks that threaten both animal and human health. Preventing the expansion of CAFOs is a critical step in reducing the risks of future pandemics and safeguarding public health.

The passage of this bill is a necessary step in protecting Oregon's water, air, and public health. Passing this bill will help safeguard Oregon's public health, protect our drinking water, and ensure that future generations are not burdened with the consequences of unchecked pollution from factory farms. I urge you and your colleagues to support SB 80.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to reach out if you require further information or if I can be of any assistance in advancing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Andrew deCoriolis
Executive Director
Farm Forward