



In Support of House Bill 2598

March 18, 2015

Dear Mr Gallagher,

Please accept this written testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources regarding House Bill 2598 and the preventative use of antibiotics on livestock. I'm sure you have heard this excuse from scores of farmers over the years, but at this time of the year I am simply not able to leave my farm for a day to be at the committee's meeting in person. I hope you will accept this document as the equivalent of spoken testimony, and/or to allow my proxy to read the letter out to the committee.

As a farmer in Oregon, I feel the pride that growing food brings to our state on a daily basis. Agriculture has long been a part of Oregon's culture, politics and economy, playing a vital part in shaping policy on land use and trade. I am honored and cheered by the fact that farmers' voices are heard in so many realms in Salem. Now, I would like to stand up for one more issue: public health.

When my husband and I started Kookoolan Farms in Yamhill 10 years ago, we made the choice to raise our cows, pigs, chickens and lambs without added antibiotics, except when they are sick, just as we use them for our human family members. Our decision was in contrast to a practice common on factory farms, where healthy animals are continuously fed antibiotics to make them grow bigger faster and to compensate for unsanitary conditions.

The stakes in these kinds of farming choices are high and have major implications for public health. Antibiotics save millions of lives a year across the globe. But unfortunately, they are becoming less effective when they are overused on some livestock farms — large and small farms alike. In fact, 70 percent of all antibiotics used in the United States each year are used on livestock and poultry.

When these drugs are used on a continuous rather than a short-term basis for acute illnesses, bacteria have more chances to mutate and become resistant to them. The resulting "super bugs" can travel off the farm through products, farm workers, vehicles and animal waste, even when proper precautions are taken. Top medical authorities such as the World Health Organization are warning that, without corrective action, we face a "post-antibiotic future" in which we no longer have antibiotics effective against bacterial diseases.

That scenario is a terrifying prospect, not just for my family, my animals and my customers, but for the world's population at large.

My husband and I both have physics and engineering backgrounds in addition to our passion for farming. Our perspective allows us to view our farm as part of a larger system, playing its part in the environment and impacting the systems around us.

Our animals are raised outdoors, in the sunshine with room to grow and develop healthy immune systems so they can withstand the normal numbers of bacteria present on a farm. We represent a broad section of the agricultural community here in Oregon that, while not certified organic, still chooses to raise all products, animal and vegetable alike, with a careful eye on the environmental and systemic impacts of our choices. Our farm is just one of thousands across the United States and around the world that offer living proof that it is not necessary to overuse antibiotics on healthy animals to raise a profitable product. Oregon's farmers want to nourish the state and believe public health should be increased, not endangered, by producing food to put on our tables.

Fortunately, as state lawmakers, you have the power to curtail the overuse of antibiotics by supporting House Bill 2598, which would help ensure that antibiotics are used only when animals are sick. This is a common-sense proposal, one farmers can support. It will protect the health of our animals and customers, now and in the future.

Sincerely

Chrissie Manion Zaerpoor

Founder, Owner and President

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