

March 24, 2015

TO: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
FR: David Rosenfeld, Executive Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group
(OSPIRG)
RE: Support for House Bill 2598

OSPIRG supports HB 2598. We thank Reps. Buckley and Greenlick and Sen. Monnes Anderson for putting forward this and similar legislation in the Senate (SB 920), and to the Committee for taking the time to consider this matter.

To assist the committee in understanding the scale of the problem addressed by HB 2598, and the remarkable degree of cohesion in the medical establishment around this issue, I have also submitted the following documents as testimony:

- World Health Organization, [2011 statement by Director-General Margaret Chan](#)
- World Health Organization, [2011 policy recommendations](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013, [Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States](#), pp. 36-37
- List of [national public health organizations in support](#) of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act, a federal bill authored by Congress' only microbiologist, Louise Slaughter. HB 2598 is modeled off PAMTA.

In short, medical authorities are warning that the effectiveness of antibiotics is in jeopardy. There are a number of reasons for this; one of which is the overuse of antibiotics on animals raised on factory farms.

Up to 70 percent of antibiotics sold in the United States are used on livestock and poultry. These antibiotics are not primarily used to treat sick animals. Instead, antibiotics are often put into the daily feed of healthy animals to promote growth and prevent disease due to overcrowded conditions.

As a result, bacteria commonly present on farms are mutating into stronger, antibiotic-resistant strains. These germs, sometimes called "superbugs", can then find their way to the human population through numerous pathways, including contaminated food, airborne dust blowing off farms, and water and soil polluted with contaminated feces. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 2 million Americans become infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections each year.

The solution is clear: to protect antibiotics and combat the spread of drug-resistant bacteria that are harming thousands of Americans, antibiotics should be given to food animals sparingly and only when they are sick or to contain verified disease outbreaks.

The federal government's actions to date, while a step forward, are still inadequate. On the positive side, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has acknowledged the public health threat posed by antibiotic overuse on farm animals. However, the FDA is only moving forward to address one part of the problem, antibiotics for growth promotion, while largely neglecting the other part, disease prevention. Moreover, the FDA program's voluntary nature leaves us deeply skeptical that the government's actions will truly abate the problem.ⁱ

House Bill 2598 would put Oregon on the right path to protecting antibiotics because it:

- 1. Prohibits giving antibiotics to healthy farm animals in Oregon.** Healthy humans aren't supposed to take antibiotics; neither should healthy farm animals. The measure has exceptions for when there is a significant need to control the spread of disease. To keep the measure focused on the vast majority of farm animals, the bill is limited to cattle, swine and poultry; the state is empowered to add additional animals by rule.ⁱⁱ
- 2. Requires disclosure of how antibiotics are used on Oregon's largest farms.** Because the bills would still allow for some antibiotic use on healthy animals, it is important to track that use. The bills will require EPA-defined Concentrated Animal Feeding operations (CAFOs) to annually disclose the details of their antibiotic use on their farm animals, and make that information public record. This provision would affect just over 100 Oregon farms.
- 3. Limits the role of both government and the courts, and presumes the legislation will be largely self-enforcing.** The bill authorizes the state to enact additional rules to enforce the law, but only requires the state to set the format and schedule of the aforementioned CAFO annual report. Private citizens would also be empowered to enforce the law through the courts when there is a violation, but the bill prohibits any damages from being awarded.

HB 2598 is supported by many local medical professionals, farmers and consumers – and a number of organizations that represent them. This includes the Oregon Nurses Association, the Oregon Pediatric Society, Coalition of Community Health Clinics, Oregon Primary Care Association, and Greater Portland Chapter of the American Society of Medical-Surgical Nurses, as well as Friends of Family Farmers and Consumers Union.ⁱⁱⁱ

Thank you for your time and attention to this most critical issue.

ⁱ OSPIRG Foundation, July 2014, [Weak Medicine: Why the FDA's Guidelines Are Inadequate to Curb Antibiotic Resistance and Protect Public Health](#)

ⁱⁱ The point agency is the Oregon Health Authority in the Senate bill; Department of Agriculture in the House bill.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Partial list of endorsing organizations and farm and food businesses](#) (bottom of first page)