

Chairman Beyer and Members of the Committee:

For the record my name is Bobbi Harrold and I am a dairy farmer from Lane county. I am a 4th generation Dairy farmer and my family has been in the business for 75 years. Bills like this and the unintended consequences they bring are part of what makes me question whether my dairy will be around for the next generation. The language of this bill would have you believe that it is doing a service; protecting the environment, smaller farms, workers and animals in this state. As a dairyman, I can tell you that this could not be more misguided.

Being a dairyman means being dedicated to all the things I just talked about. Oregon has some of the most stringent environmental laws in the country and we are one of only states where every Dairy regardless of size has a CAFO plan. That means that every single Grade A dairy has an animal waste management plan specific to their farm. Every farm does yearly inspections with the state, maintains manure application records, and does the regular soil testing to verify those records. Caring for environment is more than just an obligation, its critical to our farms. Without land and water to raise our crops, my farm could not survive.

For 75 years my family has been living on our farm; breathing the same air and drinking the same water that our cows and crops do. To suggest that it is not a priority to me, or any other dairyman, defies logic. Dairy farming is a business of commitment. My Dad says that if you take care of the cows, they will take care of you. I think that sentiment applies to all the facets of our work; to the cows, the land and to our employees. Without dedication to any one of those three things, we simply would not have a business.

The fact of the matter is that even though our commitment to our farms is unimpeachable, regulation is one thing that Oregon's dairy industry has an abundance of. The Oregon Dept of Agriculture oversees both the CAFO and Food Safety programs, inspecting our manure and milk handling operations. Milk handling is inspected again at a Federal level. All of this comes on top of the regular inspection and 3rd party audits done by our milk handlers. The milk processors and handlers have their own programs for animal care, employee relations and environmental stewardship that farms must adhere to. These programs satisfy the needs of our customers. Doing the "right thing" in our business is essential to our daily survival.

There are supporters of this bill who believe that I am simply confused. That as a smaller farmer, bills like this would protect me. I can say unequivocally that this is false. In farming, as in life, no man is an island. Farms of all types and sizes depend on one another. As a farmer, I depend on a wide range of professionals to help me. Veterinarians, agronomists, parlor technicians, and mechanics all provide expertise and timely service to farms like mine. But when I think about the people I know in each of those sectors, I also know that they depend on the larger farms. A smaller farm like mine may only need or be able to afford these guys a handful of times a year, but a larger operation can provide more opportunity for them. If you remove all the larger operations, you are removing the chance for these professionals to keep a steady business. And then when I, or other small farmers like me, need them, they simply will not be there, or may be too far away to provide help when needed.

By attempting to pick winners and loser in the farming community based solely on farm size, you end up hurting everyone.

I am proud to be a dairy farmer. I love the work that I do, and I hope that I can keep doing it for the rest of my life. I don't know any dairymen who feel differently. The pride and commitment we have to our jobs stands irrespective to how many cows we choose to milk. I hope that the members of the committee will see this bill for what it is; a divisive, short-sighted attempt to punish an entire industry based on the bad behavior of one individual. The nearly 200 family farms that make up Oregon's dairy industry work every single day to provide the best possible care to their cows, their employees and environment they call home. More red-tape isn't going to fix a problem that doesn't exist, but it just might succeed in forcing many of those farms into giving up a legacy that has been in their family for generations.

