

Submitter: Elizabeth Gabriel

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB85

I am an Oregonian and I urge you to support a moratorium on factory farms, SB 85. As an Oregonian, I know our state is unique and special. We have a deep sense of place and want to protect our local food system and our environment, including our air and water, for generations to come. Our climate, our communities, our special places, and our small farms are more important than industry profit.

Factory farms are harming our communities. They contribute to climate change, cause water and air pollution, harm the welfare of animals, and push family farms out of business. Factory farms are a significant contributor to the climate crisis already gripping Oregon, generating more greenhouse gas emissions than small and medium farms, especially pasture-based farms. Factory farms emit respiratory irritants like ammonia and hydrogen sulfide.

Despite this air pollution, Oregon currently has no regulatory controls to protect the health and wellbeing of surrounding neighbors or prevent a worsening climate crisis.

Factory farms also use a lot of water, even in places with increasing scarcity and drought. They can use as much water as a small city but generate many times the waste. Manure and other contaminants (like heavy metals, drugs, and pathogens) leach into groundwater and runoff into surface water, making our waters dangerous for wildlife and people. Our current laws to protect water quality and quantity are not sufficient to stop this industry from harming our communities and ecosystems.

Factory farming also raises serious issues regarding environmental justice, as low-income people and communities of color disproportionately suffer the adverse effects of factory farms. Some of Oregon's largest factory dairy farms are in rural Latinx and Hispanic communities, and these communities should not suffer for private profit. These communities have no power under current laws to say "No" to a factory farm moving in.

Oregon is now a target for these mega-sized operations, particularly as neighboring states increase their environmental protections. There are current proposals for re-opening the disastrous Lost Valley mega-dairy in Morrow County and for several mega-chicken operations in the prime farmland of Willamette Valley.

Oregon's local food system is important to me. We must protect our independent family-scale farmers, and new emerging farmers, from the harms of mega-scale corporate factory farms.

Three decades ago, Oregon was home to more than twice as many smaller scale dairies as it is today. From 1992 to 2017, the number of small dairies (fewer than 200 cows) fell by two-thirds. 44 of Oregon's 500+ confined animal feeding operations are already mega-sized, and this 8% of the operations confines nearly 60% of the total farmed animals. Further consolidation will only make it impossible for smaller independent farmers to compete.

We need to learn from the mistakes of other states whose communities suffer from drinking water pollution and decreased health and quality of life. We can't allow Oregon to become the next hotbed for factory farms. Urgent action is needed to protect Oregon from the harms posed by these industrial facilities.