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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB85

Old vs New systems in Agriculture....

Our country has long benefitted from a strong and robust agricultural system that has provided us with food security and national strength. Many rural communities are centered on agricultural production in a system that employs and rewards the hard work of many agricultural families. I believe this system is at the very heart of our nation and our loyalty and support should remain steadfast.

Sadly this system of old has been decimated by a new system controlled by a very few in a monopoly. Our public funds, (subsidies, grants, public backed loans), have inured to these billion dollar corporations both directly and indirectly. Few benefit and the public bares much of the cost and risk. Agriculture, as we know and love it, is on life support.

Most tragic is the misplaced loyalty by those dedicated to protecting agriculture as they refuse to see the detrimental transformation into this new system. Some are starting to see the threat in China's purchase of our lands but ignore the greater threat of foreign control over this new system. Gone are the hundreds of farmers who grew chicken in Oregon, gone too are all of the processors. Gone are the independent business's that supported the industry with grain crops, feed mills, hatcheries, trucking, and the like. What is left is one industrial processor controlling a few mega bird factories on a vertical scale where one corporation owns, controls, and profits from it all.

These corporations will use "growers" as the exception to ownership in the vertical system as it gives arms-length to lawsuits, environmental issues, etc. while also opening the door to public funding the corporation would not qualify for otherwise. Cheap food is often given as justification for these industrialized facilities without calculating in the many subsidies and other public benefits that are hidden in the cost.

What is left under our old system is hanging by a thin thread made more difficult as the exemptions for the new system do not apply equally to the old. Commercial broiler production is the only agricultural producer exempt from Oregon's animal welfare laws. In other words, millions of Foster Farms birds are exempt when all independent farmers are not. Meanwhile laws, and funding, dedicated to our old agricultural system is being usurped for the new further crushing our domestic farmers and ranchers.

I beg of our legislature to proactively and prudently put a moratorium on industrial level facilities until such time this new system is fully understood and addressed in our laws. To those loyal to our old system of agriculture, I pray you look with new eyes on how this new system has destroyed what we passionately love. The vertically integrated processor controlled system is destroying domestic agriculture and is putting our national security at risk.

This is a new, complex, and very different system and Oregon's lawmaker's need the opportunity to catch up. We have never seen something of this size and magnitude proposed next to a school, a main waterway, or between two bedroom communities in the backyard of our state capitol and I would hope this engages our legislators in understanding this isn't traditional community based farming. This is a huge private equity fund moving into this area to utilize our resources for corporate gain. Weak laws and cover under farm protections make us vulnerable. Please support this legislation.