

**Testimony In Support of -1 Amendment
To SB 85
Senate Committee on Natural Resources
March 10, 2023
By Scott Beckstead, Director of Campaigns,
Animal Wellness Action**

On behalf of Animal Wellness Action and our Oregon supporters, I am writing to express our strong support of the -1 Amendment to SB 85. AWA supports strong animal welfare standards for animals raised for food and works closely with farmers, ranchers, and agriculture professionals across the country to promote animal production methods that are humane and sustainable. As part of our mission, we encourage public policies that support and promote the independent family farmer who embraces good animal husbandry as a core principle of how they operate.

I am qualified to address the issue of animal agriculture and CAFO policy in particular. I am an adjunct professor of law at Willamette University, where I teach classes in Animal Agriculture Law. CAFOs and CAFO policy are important topics in my classes, and having worked on Oregon CAFO policy in particular, I am closely familiar with Oregon's laws and regulations for industrial animal operations. I was born and raised on a small family farm in southern Idaho, where we took pride in providing our beef cattle and other animals with a high standard of care.

The -1 Amendment to SB 85 is aimed at limiting the growth and expansion of industrial CAFOs, where thousands of animals are tightly confined in crowded feedlot conditions, as industrial operations, not farms. Like other factories, CAFOs are notorious for generating massive amounts of air and water pollution, and require the intensive management of wastewater and animal waste. The -1 Amendment to SB 85 is a step in the right direction in stopping those negative consequences of factory farm practices.

Industrial CAFOs are not “farms” – they are animal factories. Far from the idyllic image of farm animals grazing contentedly on lush pastures, large CAFOs are industrial in nature and, like other factories, generate air and water pollution that should and must be addressed by regulating authorities. The difference between an industrial CAFO and an independent family farm is stark. Animals on CAFOs are treated like units of production with little regard for meeting their basic needs to move about freely and engage in normal behaviors. In contrast, animals are more likely to be treated humanely and given appropriate husbandry and care on the smaller family operations.

Confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) notoriously mistreat animals. The animals on CAFOs often live their lives in cramped, barren pens or on bare dirt, manure, and concrete. Beef and dairy cattle, for example, are deprived of the opportunity to graze and engage in normal

behaviors, and are fed a diet that maximizes beef or milk production, not overall good animal health. Chickens are confined in huge numbers that makes it impossible to attend to the needs of individual animals. By contrast, farms raising grass-fed or pasture-raised animals emphasize animal welfare and environmental sustainability and allow animals ample space, access to the outdoors, and the ability to socialize and interact with other animals.

The people of Oregon do not want more factory farming in the state. Large factory farms have historically put small family farms out of business and continue to do so today. Because there is nothing sustainable about confining a large number of animals in miserable conditions, most sustainable agriculture and independent family farm advocates reject large farming operations. As demonstrated by the overwhelming opposition to new pollution permits for big dairy operations in recent years, a majority of Oregonians care about the environment and want animals to be treated with greater respect.

Factory farming is notoriously anti-competitive and is harmful to the free market and the economy. Just last year a number of lawsuits against multiple different factory farming conglomerates for illegal price-fixing were settled. Major players across multiple industries, including chicken and pork, have admitted that they engaged in unlawful behavior by rigging the markets, dealing harm to the everyday consumer – the everyday Oregonian. And small family farms, the most widespread animal agriculture operations in Oregon, struggle to survive against the massive conglomerates and cooperatives that harm both the individual family farmer and all other Oregonians to line their own pockets.

Animal waste is huge contributor of greenhouse gases. Decomposing animal waste is the source of more than 160 toxic gases including hydrogen sulfide and carbon monoxide. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an adult dairy cow produced about 80 pounds of manure and up to four gallons of urine a day. The waste is not treated in a waste water treatment. Instead, the waste sits in open pits to decompose, creating gases that have an adverse impact on the environment. And finally, cattle, especially those confined in huge confined feeding operations, produce large amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas that is an important driver of climate change.

The -1 Amendment to SB 85 will have positive environmental impacts. Not only will this measure help ensure air and water quality are not adversely affected by new or expanding CAFOs, but it will protect critical fish and wildlife habitat from pollution and other negative impacts. It will also help preserve the quality of life for the people in nearby communities and preserve some of the most scenic regions within Oregon.

Conclusion: While many Oregon leaders claim to champion the cause of combating climate change, our state continues to enable and promote industrial agriculture operations that rely heavily on fossil fuels, create large quantities of greenhouse gases, and pollute our water and air. Having already rolled out the red carpet for one of the nation's largest dairy CAFOs, the state is now poised to allow massive, ruinous new poultry operations in the Willamette Valley. Those operations pose a dire threat to the natural environment, including critical fish and wildlife habitat, and will cause serious economic harm to nearby farms and communities. These operations are endemic in "Big Ag" states like Iowa, Idaho, North Carolina, and Missouri, where

industrial agriculture has caused immeasurable harm. Do we really want Oregon to join the list of those states that have turned their state over to factory farms and all their attendant negative consequences?

For the foregoing reasons, Animal Wellness Action urges you to vote YES on the -1 Amendment to SB 85.

Thank you for considering our views on this important legislation.

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