

Submitter: Chris Gibson
On Behalf Of: Lochmead Dairy Farms
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: SB85

My name is Chris Gibson, and I am a third-generation dairy farmer in Junction City. My family owns and operates Lochmead Dairy Farms and the local Dari Mart Stores.

I am writing you to express opposition to SB 85 -4. As you have experienced while visiting farms in your district, we pride ourselves on environmental stewardship, responsible management, and protecting a robust regulatory system. If SB 85 is to pass, not only could it require Oregonians to rely more on out-of-state food, but it could be impossible for family dairy farms to expand and therefore continue to operate. Our farm provides local food products but also is the foundation of our dairy plant and stores that together provide 500 family wage jobs to residents. Even though Lochmead Farms is under the 2500-cow minimum, we support the dairy industry as a whole. This may set a precedent that will eventually trickle down to smaller dairy farms like ours.

Despite what proponents of SB 85 say, Oregon livestock farms have near-perfect compliance rates and are nationally recognized for the care we provide our animals. We work diligently daily to maintain this level of care for the environment and our animals. As you know, Ag is a considerable part of our economy, and though some regulations are good, too many are detrimental to the industry. Oregon is already the highest-regulated state in the country. To have a thriving population, you need a prosperous economy; to have a flourishing economy, you need profitable businesses. Can Oregon afford to regulate family companies out of business?

Our farm, like others, experiences increased financial and regulatory burdens, including labor costs and astronomical feed costs feed and operating costs. The dairy industry is getting harder and harder every year. More and more dairies are shutting down because of the economic climate. SB 85 -4 does not acknowledge our immense financial burdens and need for efficiencies through modernization and profitability. Expansion is a critical component of success and profitability. In our environment, equipment ages faster than usual. In the name of efficiency, dairy farmers must upgrade/expand to keep up with growth, technology, and animal husbandry. Any decent dairy farmer respects and cares for their animals. Cow comfort is a crucial element to success. Many companies have invested millions of dollars researching and developing "cow comfort" technologies, barn designs, parlor designs, etc... Most of these technologies hinge on being able to upgrade/expand.

It could restrict our access to water and limit stock water which is critical for our

operations. I am also profoundly troubled by the proposal for a work group to consider whether our dairy farming practices should be viewed as an animal abuse crime.

Suggestions for Changing the Program-

I don't like to complain without offering a solution. We stand by responsible management and recognize that if areas need to be tightened to prevent loopholes and bad actors, we can do so by amending the permit program and do not need SB 85 to accomplish this. To improve the program, I suggest additional steps to the permitting process, including preliminary consultation and new occupancy review.

Broader Impact-

Before I conclude, I want to express this bill's broad impacts and unintended consequences. This doesn't only affect "dairy", it affects many Ag industries. We purchase seeds, fertilizer, milking equipment, tractors, supplies, feed etc.

Over-regulating will impact CAFOs in an immeasurable way. Now imagine the overall impact on all Agriculture. Can you imagine a substantial portion of these commodities going out of state? What impact will that have on our economy, and do we want to start trucking milk and milk products from out of state?

This bill could devastate family operations or other farms like ours. On behalf of my family operation and other Oregon producers, we ask that you oppose SB 85-4.

Sincerely,

Chris Gibson