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Testimony of Humane Oregon in Support of Senate Bill 197 (2017)
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

March 8, 2017

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Olsen, and members of the Committee:

Humane Oregon is a bi-partisan, non-profit organization formed in 2014 to help advocate for animal welfare in Oregon's political process and elections. We are a moderate but progressive animal welfare organization, with board members representing many different parts of Oregon's animal welfare community.

Humane Oregon supports Senate Bill 197 because clean air is good for animals as well as people. Clean air makes life better for animals, both on and off the farm, because they breathe the air like we do. Moreover, air quality regulations for dairy confined animal feeding operations will encourage management practices that, in addition to making the air cleaner for everyone, are likely to give dairy cows a better life in other respects. For example, management practices that improve air quality are likely to also give the cows more opportunity to graze outside instead of being confined year-round indoors on concrete.

While many small family farmers are good stewards of their farmland, our environment, and their dairy cows, these farmers are being outcompeted by less responsible mega-dairies that take advantage of lax environmental regulations and tax policies that benefit primarily large operations. Over the course of 15 years between the USDA's 1997 and 2012 farm census, the statistical group of farms with 10-499 dairy cows shrunk by about half in terms of both the number of farms and the number of cows. Meanwhile, the statistical group of farms with 1,000 or more dairy cows more than doubled, with the number of cows on such farms increasing by more than 550 percent.

This trend toward industrialization of dairy operations, including one dairy in Oregon with approximately 70,000 cows and another proposed to have approximately 30,000 cows, makes the need for air quality regulation more acute because, as other more qualified witnesses will tell you, large industrial dairies create more air quality problems. These air quality problems should be regulated. In the process, the lives of both people and animals will be improved.

Thank you for considering our comments.

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