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## OEC urges NO vote on State Issue 2

### Group concludes that Issue 2 may discourage stronger protections of air and water near animal feeding facilities and thwart disclosure of antibiotics and hormones on food labels

(Columbus, OH)—The Ohio Environmental Council today announced its opposition to State Issue 2, a wide-ranging proposal to amend the Ohio Constitution in the name of “safe and affordable” food to establish livestock and poultry confinement standards.

The OEC opposes Issue 2 because it believes that the proposed language and its invoking of “affordable food supplies” can be distorted to discourage the adoption of stronger environmental standards at animal feeding facilities and can thwart the disclosure of the presence of antibiotics or hormones in food on product labels. The OEC also concludes that Issue 2 is poor public policy, is weak on enforcement, and will place a potential strain on the state budget.

The OEC, an environmental conservation organization, is engaging on Issue 2 because of the threat to air and water quality that come from common industrial agriculture practices that pack livestock and poultry into confined spaces. These high-density practices are sometimes associated with:

- unhealthy air vented from crowded animal feeding facilities;
- water pollution from massive amounts of animal waste, which sometimes is over-applied to farm fields; and
- the misuse of antibiotics and other pharmaceutical drugs, which routinely are added to animal feed even though the animals are not ill.

After carefully examining the language of Issue 2 and listening to all sides of the debate, the OEC has concluded that Issue 2 is:

- Bad environmental and public health policy. The wording of Issue 2 can potentially block new air, water, and food standards in the name of “affordable food supplies.” More rigorous environmental protections, such as increased distance set-backs between animal waste lagoons and stream and ground water sources, keeping pharmaceuticals out of waste water, air pollution controls to collect dust and particulate matter, come with a price tag. That could be enough reason for the politically-appointed livestock board established by Issue 2 to block such standards in the name of “affordability.”

- Regressive food policy. Issue 2's vague language can lead to the adoption of food labels that restrict consumers from learning about the presence and possible human health affects of antibiotics and synthetic hormones in food products. Last year, the Ohio Department of Agriculture sided with Monsanto Corp. and other industry groups to thwart an effort by local dairy producers and processors to simply label as "RBST-free" any milk or dairy products produced or sold in Ohio without this synthetic hormone.
- Poor public policy. The Ohio Constitution is not the proper venue for this issue. Nor did the proposal receive adequate debate when it was before the General Assembly; rather it was rushed through the legislature in a handful of days, with only one day's worth of hearings.
- Unnecessary. Livestock confinement standards could be established by a law adopted by the legislature, just as the state of Michigan did earlier this month. This would allow a full public process and could provide for environmental issues to be part of the discussion.
- Weak on enforcement and a strain on the state budget. Because the most vocal backers of Issue 2 are the business associations of industrialized livestock and poultry operators, and because Issue 2 is silent on enforcement, the OEC is skeptical that Issue 2 will result in any rigorous, enforceable standards or that animal feeding facilities will pay any tax or fee for Issue 2's administration. Rather, these interests likely will pursue only minimal, voluntary standards that shield violations from public view and that pass along any administrative or compliance costs to taxpayers. This would set a dangerous precedent, inviting other industries to copy its bad example.

In addition to resisting more informative food labels, the pharmaceutical and animal agriculture industries also are fighting federal legislation to phase out the mixing of antibiotics into animal feed. Livestock producers routinely add antibiotics to animal feed for healthy animals, which promotes faster growth and compensates for unsanitary and crowded conditions.

An estimated 70 percent of all U.S antibiotics and related drugs are used in animal agriculture even though the animals are not ill. When bacteria are exposed to antibiotics, the bacteria resistant to these drugs live to reproduce. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has declared antibiotic resistance to be one of its top concerns.

Campaign finance reports filed last week with the Ohio Secretary of State's office reveal that more than \$1.2 million of the \$4 million in campaign cash raised by the pro-Issue 2 campaign has come from out-of-state pharmaceutical and animal agriculture groups, including Ely Lily Corp., the Arizona Pork Council, the Texas Turkey Federation, and the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council.

"Issue 2 is a nuanced proposal involving a serious issue, the confinement of livestock and poultry," said Joe Logan, Director of Agricultural Programs for the OEC.

"But the more we analyze the constitutional amendment, and the more we learn about the \$1 million pumped into the Issue 2 campaign by out-of-state pharmaceutical and animal

agriculture industries, the more skeptical we've grown. We firmly believe that State Issue 2 is bad for Ohio's Constitution and bad for Ohio's environment."

"State Issue 2 is a threat to stronger air and water protections and to disclosure of antibiotics and hormones in food products. We urge Ohioans to vote NO on State Issue 2," said Logan.

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio's leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio's families and communities. For more information, visit [www.theOEC.org](http://www.theOEC.org).