



**Testimony of Amber Meyer Smith, Vice President of Programs and Government Relations
SB 31
Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee
April 30, 2019**

Clean Wisconsin is a non-profit environmental advocacy group focused on clean water, clean air and clean energy issues. We were founded almost fifty years ago and have 20,000 members and supporters around the state.

We certainly appreciate the Chairman's intent to re-examine some of the inherent issues with our CAFO fee structure. This bill calls attention to the fact that CAFO fees are woefully inadequate to support the necessary oversight that we count on our government to provide.

Many people have been focused on agricultural pollution in the past few years, with science providing us increasing evidence of the direct link between agricultural runoff and drinking water contamination. Chairman Cowles himself helped launch an audit of DNR's CAFO program which revealed several inadequacies with respect to staffing and enforcement to carry out agency procedures. It is clear that much more needs to be done to make sure that people's health and our waters are protected from the huge pollution potential that comes along with a large agricultural operation. People are demanding bold action, and unfortunately this bill falls short of delivering enough resources to begin to address the problems.

We support the concept that all fees should be deposited with the agency for staffing, but it is hard not to see the stark contrast with Governor Evers budget proposal to add 5 staff at DNR to deal with CAFO permits by raising fees. This bill would generate \$76,250 and the Governor's proposal will generate \$310,000 annually. Raising the fee is a necessary component of any effort to make an impact on how our state looks at CAFO permitting and enforcement. Wisconsin currently has the lowest CAFO fees in the Midwest.

It is well past time that we rectify this and better align CAFO permit fees in Wisconsin with our neighboring states in order to provide needed resources for permitting and enforcement to make sure that CAFOs aren't contributing to the pollution problems we face.

In other DNR programs, industry willingly pays fees commensurate with the staffing needs of the agency. For instance, industries that rely on air permits have championed fee increases in the past in order to ensure the programs they regularly interact with are fully staffed. They realize that adequate staffing means they get faster and better-quality permits that ultimately help ensure they are operating in ways that make environmental harm unlikely. We think it's time the CAFO community embrace the same attitude.

We also hope that the supporters of this bill will join us in supporting the CAFO fees proposed in the Governor's budget and the 5 staff that will add great value as the DNR continues its work to address agricultural pollution.