

Dear Chair Witt and members of the committee,

I urge you all to approve HB 2612. Raw butter has an excellent track record for food safety, with no food borne illnesses attributed to the consumption of commercially produced raw butter in the past 30 years. The sale and or distribution of raw butter is currently legal in 11 other states, most notably in California, where one dairy, Raw Farm (formerly Organic Pastures Dairy Company), has sold over 2 million pounds of raw butter in the past 20 years without a *single* incident. This is a very impressive food safety record. But that is just one possible benefit.

Oregon has lost 1,706 dairy farms between 1992 and the present. According to data from the USDA and the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, in 1992 Oregon had over 1,900 farms with dairy cows, but in the latest data, the number of dairy farms in the state has decreased by an alarming 90% to 194. That is 1,706 independent or small businesses that have been lost in the past 29 years. Passage of HB 2612 would benefit dairy farmers currently struggling to make a living in Oregon, and encourage new farmers to join, by providing the opportunity to sell a premium product through multiple avenues of sale. These avenues of sale would allow for a diversification of income sources to dairy farmers, be that through sales to retail, restaurant, or directly to the final consumer. This diversification of revenue will help in making these businesses more resilient, and can help stem the alarming decline in the number of Oregon dairy farms. However, that is not all.

With growing consumer demand for locally produced foods like butter, repealing the current ban on raw butter would allow Oregon residents access to a premium health food product, Oregon dairy farmers to more diverse business income streams, *and* keep Oregon food dollars within the local economy. It is a win-win scenario without any downsides, and it is my hope that HB 2612 is approved.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony, I am grateful that you are all taking the time to consider making a health giving, locally produced food available again through the legalization of raw butter sales in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A concerned citizen and consumer