

Submitter: Megan Whiteford

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB2616

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee,

My name is Megan Whiteford and I'm excited to write in support of HB 2616.

As a responsible fellow farmer & consumer, I want to make sure that Oregon's dairy industry follows the best possible standards across the board, especially around raw milk. Unfortunately, Oregon's raw milk regulations are falling behind — it is time to revisit and upgrade our outdated raw milk laws.

For years, I have been interested in drinking more raw milk. It seems that the amount of farmers who choose to offer this as an option is extremely limited, which I believe is a result of the restrictions they face in the marketplace. The farmers who I have contacted in the past, generally have limited supply and already have their customer base. As a small-scale farmer myself, I know how it can be difficult to enter the market with concerns around insurance and marketing ability. The new proposals within this bill will make this process less daunting, hopefully increasing the amount of individuals offering this product, filling a gap in the marketplace that is currently present.

If passed, HB 2616 will ensure that Oregon producers are able to meet the growing demands for raw milk in our state safely and effectively, by implementing nationally-recognized testing, safety and risk mitigation measures and giving cow dairies the same opportunities that goat and sheep dairies already have.

For licensed dairies, raw cow's milk is currently off the table. Oregon allows the retail sale of raw milk from sheep and goats, but not from cows — no other state makes this distinction in the retail market. It's time to fix this discrepancy and improve the safety, testing and training standards for raw milk production across the board — whether you're milking goats, sheep or cows.

For smaller licensed-exempt producers, HB 2616 offers critical upgrades as well. If passed, this legislation will give small cow dairies new possibilities to grow, expand their business and reach more consumers in this growing industry. HB 2616 will also allow small producers more flexibility in how they get their products to their consumers — eliminating the burdensome requirement that sales transactions take place on-site. These small, common-sense upgrades will help both Oregon's farmers

and the customers they serve.

As a consumer, I am thrilled to see this bill before your committee. If passed, this bill will increase the amount of farmers providing this product and allow me to purchase raw milk more consistently for myself and my family.

Oregon's raw milk policies are out of date and it's time for a change. This legislation will raise the raw milk standards in Oregon and ensure better transparency, access and accountability across the board.

I urge your support for HB 2616.

Thank you,

Meg Whiteford