

Submitter: Maya Taylor

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 Maya Taylor and I'm excited to write in support of HB 2616. I am a scientist working in environmental quality, a mother of two, and a supporter of small family farms.

I have been purchasing raw milk from local pasture-based farms for the past 10 years to make my own traditional buttermilk, cheese, and yogurt. These products cannot be properly made with conventional pasteurized and homogenized milk. I've had to go to great lengths to purchase raw milk, including driving significant distances from my home and having pick-up locations frequently changed due to liability concerns for the hosting businesses. Two of the three farms I have supported have stopped producing raw milk due to the hurdles and challenges posed by our current regulations. At this time, I no longer have a safe and reliable source of raw milk. It is extremely disheartening to have to purchase dairy products packaged in single-use plastic waste when I know I could easily produce higher-quality products myself if the raw ingredients were available.

It is important to me to support local family farms that are raising food without the use of chemical pesticides that impact our soil, air, and water quality. The farms I support are raising animals on pasture, which provides soil carbon sequestration and regenerative benefits. It is very disappointing to see the state of Oregon continue to make life difficult for these small farmers while allowing the expansion of CAFOs, despite their demonstrated record of environmental pollution and harm to local communities.

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 myself, I am thrilled to see this bill before your committee. If passed, this bill will help me continue to make my own traditional dairy products while supporting regenerative small farms.

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,

Maya Taylor