



January 26, 2023

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

Re: HB 2616 – Raw Milk Opposition

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

Oregon Dairy Farmers Association is the voice for Grade A licensed dairy farms around our state. Our producers are family farmers who support some of our state's most well-known and beloved brands and provide safe, nutritional dairy products to our homes, schools, restaurants and beyond. We represent small dairies, large dairies, organic and traditional producers, and other industry partners.

Raw Milk is Unsafe

We are strongly opposed to HB 2616. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and health agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics agree that raw milk is unsafe because it can contain disease-causing pathogens. Illnesses caused by these bacteria can be especially problematic for infants, young children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised.

The presence of germs in raw milk is unpredictable. Illness can occur from the same source of raw milk that people had been drinking for a long time without becoming ill. The number of disease-causing germs in the raw milk may be too low to make a person sick for a long time, and later are high enough to make the same person seriously ill.

Negative laboratory tests to detect germs in raw milk do not guarantee that raw milk is safe to drink. Tests do not always detect low levels of contamination. People have become very sick from drinking raw milk that came from farms that regularly tested their milk for bacteria.

Raw Milk is Unregulated

In Oregon, we have very high standards for our dairy producers. We are regulated under the PMO – Pasteurized Milk Ordinance and the National FARM Program. Oregon Department of Agriculture closely monitors our food safety programs, and bears responsibility for managing recalls. Individual processors also have their own inspections and additional requirements imposed internally and through the private supply chain. These structures and processes are the backbone of protecting public health and the integrity of our food supply.

We urge the committee to carefully consider the lack of oversight and regulation of raw milk. There are numerous cow share farms that have more than the state allowed two milking cows. They have diverted regulations and sell “shares” of a cow, so families don’t directly purchase milk.

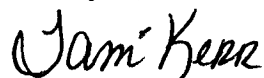
Raw Milk Compromises Trust in Dairy Products and Harms Grade A Dairies

There has been misinformation surrounding benefits HB 2616 could provide to Grade A licensed dairies by expanding their markets and creating new revenue streams. This is not true. Every Grade A licensed farm has a contract with a processor, all milk produced on their farm goes solely to the processor. It would be a breach of contract to sell some of the milk as a raw product.

HB 2616 does more harm than good to Grade A dairies because when a raw milk outbreak occurs, consumers lose trust in the safety of *all* dairy products. As a collective of responsible producers, we know first-hand the risks we all face in the event of a food safety issue implicating dairy products. While organic, traditional, and un-pasteurized products are distinct definitions well-known in our industry, in the event of a health problem with a dairy product, we all become the face of such problems. We aim to provide assurances to Oregonians that our products are the highest quality and safe.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association strongly opposes HB 2616. A safe food supply and the integrity of our product is critical, the most vulnerable members of our population deserve to be protected. Pasteurization has made milk one of the safest foods in the world.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tami Kerr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tami Kerr, Executive Director
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association