

Chair Whitt and members of the committee,

I would like to express my support of HB 2612. Please consider the following:

1. Raw butter has an excellent track record for food safety. The Centers for Disease Control CDC has a database tracking foodborne illness outbreaks from 1998 to 2016; during that time there was not a single foodborne illness outbreak attributed to the consumption of commercially produced raw butter. Neither have there been any foodborne illness outbreaks linked to raw butter consumption since 2016. The sale and or distribution of raw butter is currently legal in 11 other states, including California where one dairy, Raw Farm, formerly Organic Pastures Dairy Company, has sold over 2 million pounds of raw butter over the past 20 years without incident.

2. Passage of HB 2612 would better enable dairy farmers to make a living and could help stem the decline in the number of Oregon dairy farms. In 1992 Oregon had 1,900 farms with dairy cows, according to USDA data; the latest figures from the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association shows there are 194 dairy farms left in the state.

3. Consumer demand for locally produced foods like raw butter continues to grow. With the current ban on raw butter, Oregon residents travel to California to purchase raw butter, costing the dairy industry revenue. Passage of HB 2612 would keep more of the food dollar within the state.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Melissa Ward