

Thank you members of the committee.

My name is Russ Brandt, and I lead bulk milk transportation at Darigold.

As one of the nation's five largest dairy co-ops, we have an obligation to our customers and to our member-owners to continue creating and sustaining markets for the milk our farmers produce.

Long-term, that means we need to do our part as a co-op and as an industry to mitigate impacts of our business to issues surrounding climate change. For a business like ours to succeed for more than 100 years, it requires that we always have an eye on the future. For us, that future will be driven by modernizing our business to keep pace with growing worldwide demand for US dairy products, and to do so in ways that are more efficient and more sustainable. Our co-op, along with the dairy sector, has committed to being greenhouse gas-neutral by 2050. We know that meeting this goal will require action across our system: On the farms that provide our milk; in the production facilities where we make the high-quality dairy products; and with the transportation systems that allow us to deliver those products safely and efficiently.

We are asking for consideration of increasing the gross vehicle weight limit to 129,000 pounds from 105,500 pounds for bulk liquid dairy products. Darigold would expect a 10-12% reduction of loads transported and as we have seen with this change in Idaho, 19% less miles driven and 9% less diesel fuel consumed.

I would like to take a minute to address some misperceptions surrounding the use of 129,000-pound trucks.

First, the perception that 129,000-pound trucks are not legal to operate for this purpose. The fact is the 2015 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act – or FAST Act – designates trucks carrying dairy products as “non-divisible loads.” As such, states may issue permits for these vehicles, in accordance with state law, to exceed the gross weight limit of 80,000 pounds or the maximum weight allowed by the Federal Bridge Formula.

Second, the perception that heavier trucks cause more damage to the roadway than lighter trucks. The fact is the sheer weight of a truck is not the largest determinate of road damage; axle weight is the largest determinant. The 129,000-pound truck configurations proposed have nine or ten axles, reducing the weight per axle below other, lower weight truck configurations. As we reduce axle weight, the data shows the damage to roadways is reduced exponentially.

Finally, I would like to address the perception that heavier trucks are more dangerous to public safety. A study by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program found that heavier trucks have been associated with *fewer* crashes, due to fewer trucks being needed to haul the same volume of cargo.

With so many upsides, we believe it is worth your consideration and I hope you will join us in supporting this proposal.

Thank you for your time today.