

Submitter: Michelle McMillen

On Behalf
Of:

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

Measure: HB2616

HB 2616: Raw Milk

Link to Bill: <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Measures/Overview/HB2616>

Public Hearing: Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 3:00 PM

Deadline to Submit Written Testimony: Thursday, Jan. 26 at 3:00 PM

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

My name is Michelle McMillen and I am firmly in support of HB 2616.

As a responsible 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Unfortunately, Oregon's raw milk regulations are falling behind — it is time to revisit and upgrade our outdated raw milk laws.

Raw milk has gotten a bad rap, and I think it's mostly from Big Ag (corporations). Generations of my family and likely yours lived long, healthy lives using raw milk, often from their own family cow(s). Now we have testing, safety and risk mitigation measures that make raw milk from responsible Oregon producers an excellent option for consumers who desire this product (and products made from raw milk, like cheese) and want to support small family farmers. We can already purchase raw sheep and goat milk from them; why not raw cow milk? It's far past time for Oregon to modernize its dairy laws. That's why I support HB 2616.

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 allow me to purchase quality food for my family AND support small family farmers who truly care for their animals and customers by name, instead of huge corporations so often governed only by the 'bottom line.'

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,

Michelle McMillen