



The Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials

January 24, 2023
House Agriculture
HB 2616

Good afternoon, Chair Helm and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Sarah Lochner, here on behalf of the Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO), representing Oregon's 33 local public health entities across the state. The vast majority of my members are county public health departments.

CLHO is strongly opposed to HB 2616, as there is extensive documentation showing that raw milk is a known public health risk. In many cases, public health has done such a good job eradicating disease that many folks take it for granted. People today have no personal knowledge of what horrors unpasteurized milk caused in the past, and so they assume that if the farm is well maintained, raw milk must be safe.

In fact, raw milk is one of the world's most dangerous foods, responsible for almost three times more hospitalizations than any other foodborne disease source (Alegbeleye et al. 2018). The symptoms of raw milk pathogen consumption range from diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, fever, and abdominal cramps to severe syndromes such as Guillain-Barré (pronounced ghee-yan bar-ray), hemolytic uremic syndrome, septicemia, meningitis, and intrauterine infections in pregnant women (**Alegbeleye et al. 2018**). Spontaneous abortion or even death may occur as a result of consuming raw milk.

The CDC states that between 2007 and 2012, there were an average of 1,317 illnesses, 277 hospitalizations, and two deaths each year linked to

raw milk or raw milk products. HOWEVER, The actual numbers could be higher as many cases go unreported.

A substantial number of these raw milk outbreaks involved children: From 2007 to 2012, at least one child under the age of five was involved in 59% of the outbreaks. Kids aged 1-4 accounted for 38% of the *Salmonella* illnesses and 28% of the Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* illnesses, which can cause kidney failure, long-term health consequences, and death (**CDC 2017**).

People who are determined to consume raw milk products already have an avenue to purchase it. Allowing sales at farmers markets would effectively become an advertisement for raw milk. People associate wholesome goodness with farmers markets, and allowing raw milk sales there will seem like a label of safety and endorsement. The Oregon Legislature, in a past session, passed a bill to allow SNAP benefits / food stamps to be redeemed at farmers markets. We cannot open up this can of worms and make low-income parents and children more vulnerable to the hardships that come with having major health issues as a result of consuming raw milk, paid for courtesy of their government benefits.

Public Health professionals want everyone to live to be 93. The data tells us that raw milk sales expansion will take us in the wrong direction – FURTHER away from this goal.

We urge you to oppose this bill, for the public's health. Thank you.

Source:

[Article](#) – Is Raw Milk Worth the Risk?