

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

My name is Corinne Thomas and I'm excited to write regarding HB 2616.

We started farming a 22-acre property in Newport, Oregon in 2019 with a dozen chickens, five Oberhasli dairy goats and two livestock guardian dogs. We operate under the small farm exemption and sell raw goat milk direct from our farm to the consumer. I am a soil scientist and former environmental planner while my husband is a former Certified Public Accountant. We are grateful for the existing exemption that allows us to serve our local community. Our customers value our raw goat milk for its delicious flavor, probiotics, and excellent nutritional value. We have customers who prefer goat milk for digestibility, as well as those who are lactose intolerant and we serve a niche local market. At peak production we produce about two gallons per day. It doesn't sound like much, but it contributes to our diverse income stream from a variety of products that we produce sustainably. We perform periodic milk testing and we have a risk analysis management plan. We've studied guidance from OSU and the Raw Milk Institute regarding dairy production and safety. We are responsible producers under the existing exemption and haven't had any issues with the quality of our milk.

We are in favor of amending the existing exemption to include allowing deliveries to the consumer as well as sales at our local farmer's markets (HB 2616 -page 1, lines 16-18). As a diverse small farmer who contributes to local food production in our community, **we respectfully request that amendments proposed in HB 2616 - page 2, lines 8-18 do not mandate expenses by the farmer that would make it economically infeasible to produce and sell our raw goat milk in the future.** Guidance is welcome, but expensive mandates that push small producers out of business due to licensing & monitoring requirements is adverse to our small farm and many others who currently operate successfully under the exemption.

We work to educate our customers on how to care for their raw milk once they take possession, which includes educating them about risks associated with raw milk. **The most important motivator for us to provide a safe product is our inherent liability as a producer that drives us to only release milk to our customers that is safe and delicious.** If we were to allow a bad product to go out to our customers, we risk being sued. We like the way this works now and are not opposed to additional uniform guidance from the State that is in line with the Raw Milk Institute's program for listed farmers, where listing is an option and guidance is free. However, mandating extensive testing and licensing requirements under the exemption no longer offers the same benefit to small farms like ours (having nine or fewer goats/sheep that have lactated once) and could force us to stop producing raw milk. These sorts of mandates are easily absorbed by large factory farms, but often infeasible for small farmers who struggle to make a living in serving their local community. We respectfully request that you consider expanding access to raw milk through the proposed amendments, but hope that amendments to this exemption do not result in an arduous and expensive set of requirements that make it infeasible for small producers to continue to operate under the exemption that previously has served us well.

Thank you,

Corinne Thomas