

May 14, 2019

Dear Members of the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture & Forestry:

On behalf of Dairy Farmers of America, Inc. (DFA), I write to oppose legislation that would change the language displayed on the warning label and sign required for unpasteurized “raw” milk sales in the state of Vermont. This legislation would also allow unpasteurized “raw” milk sales directly to consumers at farmers markets. Such legislation would put consumer health and safety at risk.

DFA is a national dairy marketing cooperative that serves and is owned by nearly 14,000 members on approximately 8,000 farms, 115 of which are in Vermont. DFA is also one of the country’s most diversified manufacturers of dairy products, food components and ingredients, and is a leader in formulating and packaging shelf-stable dairy products.

Dairy farmers harvest one of nature’s most wholesome and nutritious products each and every day. Raw or unpasteurized milk, however, is also the perfect host for many harmful and dangerous germs and pathogens such as bacteria, viruses and parasites. When consumers become ill due to consuming unpasteurized raw milk, regardless of the dairy’s size or nature of incident, the entire industry is negatively impacted.

These cases not only hurt dairy farmers, dairy processors and manufacturers, but they also undermine the public’s trust in the dairy products they consume daily. Pasteurization is the most proven and secure method of ensuring that harmful and life-threatening bacteria and other pathogens are removed from the milk supply. Pasteurization offers consumers assurance that their milk is safe.

The state’s current warning label on unpasteurized raw milk products serves an important purpose – to make clear to consumers the risk in consuming such products. The changes proposed may diminish the concern expressed by the medical community. The sale of unpasteurized milk has been opposed by every major regulatory and health organization in the United States, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics. Additionally, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a website dedicated to the dangers of consuming raw milk (<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-index.html>). The CDC’s safety-based opposition includes a document that warns “*Protect yourself and your loved ones. Avoid raw milk; it's just not worth the risk.*”

Broadening the sale of unpasteurized raw milk to Vermont consumers through this legislation may cause irreparable harm to the state’s dairy industry and to the consumers who enjoy the wholesome and nutritious dairy products produced by the state’s dairy farming community.

DFA strongly opposes this legislation and asks that you do the same. Please feel free to contact me at 802-495-9027 or stwalsh@dfamilk.com should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Walsh
Director, Industry & Community Affairs
Dairy Farmers of America

