



Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

*Growing local farms, healthy food, and strong communities
in Vermont since 1971.*



April 14, 2021

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture,

I'm writing to you on behalf of NOFA-VT in support of H.218, the raw milk bill currently before your committee. H.218 would expand economic opportunities for raw milk producers, support consumers seeking access to this product, and support the continuation and diversification of our state's dairy industry across different scales and types of production.

Currently, most raw milk has to be sold on the farm on which it was produced. Tier 2 producers, which includes some certified organic producers, can deliver directly to customers' homes or sell at farmers markets. By allowing sales at other farms' farm stands and CSAs, H.218 would not only provide much needed expanded market access for raw milk producers, but also increase economic opportunities for those farm stand and CSA owners who want to sell this product.

As you have heard directly from raw milk producers who have testified before your committee, raw milk is a highly regulated product. Tier 2 producers have to follow stringent regulations as well as conduct twice monthly milk testing. The current regulations are working, and there is a strong safety record for fluid raw milk sales since they have been regulated in Vermont. Regarding any concerns expressed about the safety of off-farm sales, the ability to sell at farmers' markets has taught producers how to safely deliver raw milk to off-site retail environments. Farmers know how to do this right.

In alignment with our mission, NOFA-VT seeks policy change that moves us collectively toward an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just Vermont agricultural system.

This bill gets us closer to that vision not only by supporting expanded market opportunities for producers, but by increasing collaboration between farmers and allowing consumers to access raw milk at locations where they are purchasing or picking up other farm products as opposed to driving sometimes long distances between farms or other retail outlets to buy local food.

Expanding raw milk sales as proposed by H.218 is one simple and important change we can make right now to provide expanded economic opportunities for farmers, improve access to

locally produced, nutrient dense food, and support the overall well-being and livability of our rural communities. We urge you to support dairy farmers and pass H.218 out of your committee this session.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maddie Kempner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maddie Kempner
Policy Director, NOFA-VT