



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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## **Representative Dawson Holle**

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Good Morning Chairman Beltz and Members of the Agriculture Committee,

For the record, my name is Dawson Holle, and I'm honored to represent the great people of District 31. I'm here today with excitement and enthusiasm to introduce HB 1131, which allows the sale of raw milk products.

Let's start with the big picture. North Dakota's dairy industry is facing a real crisis. We've seen a dramatic decline in the number of dairy farms—down from hundreds of operations just a few decades ago to fewer than 23 still operating in the state. This is more than just a statistic. It's a wake-up call! It reflects the mounting pressures our farmers face—rising costs, market volatility, and a regulatory environment that has made it harder for small farms to survive.

But today, we have a chance to turn things around!

Take a guess—how many raw milk farms are in North Dakota? With some social media searching on Facebook and Googling, I counted 17 raw milk farms. That's incredible! In just two years, we've seen an explosion in an industry that has been suffering decline for decades.

By expanding the law to include raw milk products, we're giving North Dakota farmers a fresh shot at survival—a way to revitalize their businesses and capture the attention of consumers who are hungry for locally-produced, high-quality products. This is about so much more than milk—it's about creating jobs, fostering innovation, and investing in a brighter future for North Dakota's rural communities.

## Economic Opportunity for Small Farms

This is where it gets exciting—raw milk products represent a major economic opportunity for our small farms! Right now, many farmers are managing by selling raw milk, but consumers want more! They want to be able to buy a jar of cream straight from a small-town farm. With the current laws in place, the farmer can only legally sell

raw milk to the consumer, and they would have to do the work of collecting the cream that rises to the top. But cream isn't the only product consumers want—they also want raw products like cheeses, butters, and yogurts. That's a whole new revenue stream!

By allowing the sale of raw milk products, we're empowering farmers to tap into niche markets, stand out, and build a sustainable future for dairy in North Dakota.

### Rising Consumer Demand

We all know that consumer preferences are changing. People are more conscious than ever about where their food comes from, who's producing it, and how it's made. Across the country, there's a growing demand for local, homegrown goods. Programs like Pride of Dakota and North Dakota Farm to Table have proven that consumers are eager to support local farmers and enjoy the freshness and quality that comes with buying directly from the source.

But it's not just about the economy and consumer preference—there are real, tangible health benefits to raw milk. For centuries, raw milk has been consumed for its nutritional advantages, and in recent years, research has highlighted its positive impact on health.

Raw milk is rich in beneficial bacteria, enzymes, and nutrients that are often lost during pasteurization. These live enzymes help improve digestion, enhance immune function, and contribute to overall gut health. The process of pasteurization destroys these important enzymes, which can make dairy harder to digest for some individuals.

Furthermore, raw milk contains higher levels of bioavailable vitamins and minerals like vitamin A, D, and K2—nutrients that are essential for bone health, immune function, and cardiovascular health.

Beyond just vitamins and minerals, raw milk is a natural source of healthy fats that are vital for brain health. In today's world, people are increasingly seeking out whole, unprocessed foods. Raw milk products fits perfectly into that demand, offering a nutrient-rich, minimally processed product that people can feel good about consuming.

### In Conclusion

Allowing the sale of raw milk products not only makes sense from an economic standpoint, but it also aligns with growing consumer demand for healthier, local, and minimally processed foods. By supporting this bill, we're

taking a significant step toward revitalizing our dairy industry, improving access to healthier products, and supporting the hardworking farmers who are the backbone of our communities.

Let's give North Dakota farmers the opportunity they deserve to thrive, and let's ensure that our state remains at the forefront of providing consumers with high-quality, locally-produced food.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.