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Testimony in opposition for HB 1515

To the Honorable Chair and members of the House Ag Committee,

Mr. Chair,

The Dakota Resource Council would like to make this clear that although we have opposition to this bill, it's not a bad idea. We have one primary concern about this bill regarding the grade A permit.

- 1. The Grade A permit.** We would like to point out that a grade A permit doesn't have anything to do with the quality of the milk rather than how nice your barn looks. We have several members of our organization that have the utmost standards for cleaning their cows and milking devices, but are only awarded a Grade B permit because their barn floor has some cracks in the concrete. The permit really has nothing to do with the quality of the milk.
- 2. Contracts and Quantities.** As the current law stands you can acquire raw milk for personal use using a system called herd sharing. This is a process where you own a part of the cow, pay for some of the feeding and care of the animal and by extension you are entitled to a share of the milk that the cow produces. We only ask that fair competition and safety can be achieved by limiting the milk being sold so all dairies can have an equal playing field. As it stands there are currently farmers, some of those being our members who own small scale dairies selling to local markets, in North Dakota providing raw milk to consumers from a grade B facility.

Our organization has contacted Representative Holle, and support his amendments for food safety, but if food safety is being regulated strictly then the Grade A facility really has no meaning when the milk is being regulated already.

If the food safety regulations are there, buying raw milk would be similar to when you buy sushi in North Dakota where you are reminded that eating raw foods can pose health risks but the consumer has the ability to make that choice for themselves.

Our recommendation would be to amend line 7 to state A dairy farm may sell raw milk directly to a consumer for personal consumption and remove any mention of Grade A facilities in the bill.

We recommend DO NOT PASS unless the Grade A requirement is removed.