

I am in opposition of this bill, HB 1515. My husband and I live on a farm. We raise a small herd of beef cattle and now 3 jersey cattle. I was raised on a farm in MN. To be more specific I was raised on a dairy farm. In the early 1990s my parents had to sell their farm and get out of dairy. My parents accepted jobs in North Dakota where we moved and I currently reside. While living in Minnesota, my dad was Grade A initially but when it was required to “modernize” our facility and do things differently on our farm to become Grade A, he chose to go to Grade B. It was not justifiable for our family to put in pipelines and try and throw money into upgrading our barn so it would fit into the bracket Grade A required. On the weekends we helped out our neighbor who was grade A. There was no bond with the animals. They were merely numbers and income. There was no extra work to make sure the animals were healthy, no real “quality control”. There was stripping of the teats and if mastitis was suspected, we pulled a hose where it went onto the floor and we washed it down the drain. We would then mark the animal with a paint stick and treat it. Several times the owner ended up dumping his bulk tank out because a hired hand milked that cow and not pulled the hose for the treated milk to be dumped down the drain. While I realize things have changed since the 1990s, what hasn't changed is the requirement to differentiate between the 2 classes. Grade A doesn't mean the milk is better. It simply means their equipment, facility and grounds are at Grade A classification and Grade B isn't to those standards. It has nothing to do with the quality. A Grade A can have moderate-high SCC but because of the amount of milk and it being pasteurized, it can stay. A Grade B can have excellent SCC but because their facilities aren't what is required for the Grade A certification, their milk is sent for cheese, yogurt, and butter.

My opposition of this bill comes simply based on the wording. As I discussed with Mr. Holle when we talked over the phone, I stated there was nothing preventing his family selling herdshares. I live on the eastern part of the state where there is 1 Grade A dairy. Many people wanting raw milk do not want to have to buy a share of a cow just so that when it is in lactation they can get access to their portion of the commodity from that animal. Also, many (not all) Grade A dairies don't want the public coming out to their farms, possibly carrying diseases from other farms or animals, to purchase raw milk. In MN, it is legal to purchase raw dairy from the farmer directly on their farm. So when I am approached by someone who doesn't want to purchase a share and pay me weekly regardless if the animal is lactating or dry for boarding/feed/milking I suggest they find a farmer in MN who has dairy and where it is legal for them to purchase directly from the farm itself.

The negative I see with this bill is that (1) it is only for Grade, (2) there is no extra testing required for these dairies, and (3) the outcome for those of us who currently do herdshares, the negativity we would get if individuals were getting sick from Grade dairy milk that was initially meant to be pasteurized and extra precautions were not being taken.

However, I do agree with there being a need for raw dairy. I do agree with a bill that would open up selling to public from all dairy's regardless of a grade or not, to keep current dairy local to this state.

Christina Anderson
Beaver Creek Jerseys'
Sharon, ND