

February 9, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR ND HOUSE AGRICULTURE HEARING

FROM: Julie Goeres – Pretty Rock Farm – Raw Milk Producer

SUBJECT: Testimony Neutral for HB 1515



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

My name is Julie Goeres, and I, with my family, own and operate a farm in Pretty Rock Township in Grant County, North Dakota. We currently offer raw goat milk under Herdshare agreements.

I would like to offer my testimony on House Bill 1515, relating to the sale of raw milk directly to the consumer.

Regarding the safety of raw milk, raw milk obtained from healthy animals within sanitary conditions, cooled quickly and stored in 35-39-degree Fahrenheit conditions is a low-risk, nutrient-dense and delicious food. In its unadulterated and full-fat form, raw milk has pro-biotics, enzymes and vitamins that have not been altered by pasteurization which the body can then easily digest and receive the full nutritional value of the milk.

I have several customers who receive milk from me every two weeks. They use this milk to feed their families, including babies and small children. They understand the nature of raw milk. They comply with the Herdshare requirements because they know it is the best milk they can obtain.

If the Committee wishes to dig further, there is a plethora of research and information on the safety and value of raw milk provided by the Raw Milk Institute at www.rawmilk institute.com.

Regarding the Grade A or licensing language of HB 1515 with ND Department of Agriculture, the "Grade A/licensed" designation does nothing to ensure the quality of the milk is high. More regulation on an already over-regulated industry will not help the small dairy producers or raw milk consumers in North Dakota.

While HB 1515 may give consumers more access to raw milk, where is the assurance that the product will be low risk. Raw milk intended for pasteurization is a different product than raw milk intended for human consumption. These two products require two different systems and training of the people in those systems.

Our farm has invested in a facility on our property for producing raw goat milk. It has been designed to ensure sanitary conditions are maintained before, during and after the milk has been harvested. All milking goats have their udder inspected and temperature taken before milk collection starts at every milking. If their temperature is outside the health standards or their udder feels hot or hard, that milk is kept separate and does not go to humans. Our herd is tested annually by a licensed veterinarian for zoonotic diseases, and we test our milk monthly for Coliforms, bacteria count, and antibiotics. We keep

our milking goats separate from other animals and any sick goats are removed to a separate facility away from the milking facility. We ensure that the milk is stored between 35-39-degrees. Our cleaning procedures and equipment used allow us to see and touch all areas where milk has been.

All this is done without any government oversight or requirement. We do this, because it is what is needed to produce the best product for our customers. We did not need a government agency to regulate how to produce low-risk raw milk.

Our farm is highly invested in the quality of our milk as we see our customers every week and will know right away if our milk is not meeting their expectations or causing them issues. We have sought out and received training on dairy goat husbandry, milk collection and handling procedures without government inducement.

Our customers can contact me directly if any issues arise. We enjoy feeding our community and helping them to achieve good health. Our customers want access to local food, and we want to serve them directly with a low-risk, premium product.

I am neutral towards HB 1515 because of the "Grade A/licensing" language. No law can make people care about producing low-risk raw milk or ensure that it is 100% safe. The systems and people in those systems are what ensure the milk produced is low risk. In addition, this Bill only serves the inspected large dairies which seek to take more market share from the small dairy producer.

I would be in favor of this Bill if the "Grade A/licensing" requirement and the oversight by the commissioner were deleted.

I greatly appreciate the time and attention this Committee and its members are giving to the raw milk issue and look forward to a Bill that meets the needs of consumers and producers alike.

Respectfully,

Julie N Goeres
Pretty Rock Farm
Elgin, ND