

The following is to be used for testimony in response to the raw milk Bills #6312 and #6313, acts which concern raw milk and the sale of adulterated milk and milk products.

My husband and I own and operate the Baldwin Brook Farm which is a state licensed raw milk dairy in Canterbury, CT. We have been in operation since July 2007. After constructing a new \$50,000 milk house and barn renovation for a milking parlor we were state licensed to produce and sell retail raw milk. Prior to starting our raw milk business, we met on numerous occasions with the Ct Dept. of Ag. The department of ag never gave us any indication concerning their vision for limiting access of our raw milk to on the farm only. Instead, over the past year and a half, we have invested approx. \$125,000 into our dairy and farming operation.

Our raw milk sales include approximately 100 on the farm weekly customers and 7 local retail market accounts. Our retail stores sell approximately 50% of all the milk we produce. We have customers who purchase milk weekly from the farm and retail markets that travel as far as Rhode Island, Mass, New York, New Jersey and throughout Connecticut. These customers often make a full day of shopping throughout rural Connecticut which results in increased revenue to the state.

This proposed legislation is a direct result of an issue that occurred at Town Farm Dairy in Simsbury, CT in July 2008. There were several unique factors relating to this case. First, the hired professional staff (farm managers) of the Town Farm Dairy had resigned from their post to pursue another venture in agriculture, during this time, Town Farm Dairy experienced a deficit in their labor force and in an attempt to keep the farm going brought in other paid and no-paid personnel to maintain the responsibilities with milking the cows and bottling milk. At this point, Town Farm Dairy's coliform bacteria count began to rise and continued until it exceeded the state's threshold at which time Town Farm Dairy voluntarily stopped selling milk from both the farm and their retail stores. Within one week after halting raw milk sales, Town Farm Dairy was notified of illnesses associated with their milk.

As a family owned and operated business we believe we have a vested interest in the handling and safety of our raw milk. This is a very important aspect to consider, since Town Farm Dairy is the only farm licensed to produce retail raw milk in the state of Connecticut that is not privately owned and operated.

As a raw milk producer, I am deeply committed to preserving the integrity of agriculture and the safety of the milk in which I produce. I highly support the need for proper indicators that are research and evidence based to measure milk quality, but for the Dept. of Ag to embark with legislation to this extent based on an episode from one farm that had its own unique circumstances is clearly not in the best interest in supporting the small, local, sustainable farmers throughout our state.

Please do not limit my milk sales to on the farm only. We need our retail accounts to stay in business. Do not allow quarterly feces testing as this is not a reliable test and does not ensure public safety. This test is economically devastating to the small farmer. Although I do not believe it is necessary, if monthly milk testing is increased, it must be done at the state's expense.

Sincerely,

Chris and Mavis Newton

Owners and Operators, Baldwin Brook Farm, LLC