

POSITION: OPPOSITION
TITLE: AN ACT CONCERNING RAW MILK

FROM: MAE S. SCHMIDLE
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FORMER CHAIR – NORTHEAST DIARY COMPACT
FORMER CONNECTICUT REPRESENTATIVE

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the Environment Committee. I am here this morning to voice my strong opposition to “An Act Concerning Raw Milk”

To begin with, the Dairy industry in Connecticut is in serious trouble and could be facing extinction and this bill, instead of saving, would have the opposite effect on our rapidly diminishing dairy industry at a time when we should be encouraging economic development in all areas of Connecticut industry; at a time, when dairy industry outside of Connecticut and, in some cases, out of the country behemoths are working hard to take over Connecticut’s dairy industry – I am sure you recognize that the Dairy Industry includes much more than milk producers alone – it also involves the milk processors, milk retailers, the packaging industry, the marketing industry, the trucking and transportation industry, the industry that produces the cattle feed and all of the people they employ. And last but not least the viable preservation of open space. AND ALL OF THESE HAVE BEEN RAPIDLY DECLINING and disappearing at a great loss to the Connecticut economy! Beginning immediately, a large part of the work of the Department of Agriculture in Connecticut must be to reverse that trend or, at the very least, to develop a program or plan to turn that around and IMMEDIATELY!

BUT THIS BILL DOES JUST THE OPPOSITE! As you all know, we now live in a very diverse society and some Connecticut consumers recognize that pasteurization of milk does not provide them with the particular nutritional and health benefits that they and their families require and need. As I am certain you are aware, there are volumes of new and medical information now available about the value of raw milk and its inherent health benefits. Many milk producers are also aware of these health benefits and in a declining market, they have undertaken to produce a milk product that their customers require and need. And they appear to be succeeding and providing health and nutritional benefits to a significant number of Connecticut people.

And consequently, in a seriously declining market, these milk producers and many new milk producers have developed a market for raw milk that enhances our dairy industry, our economy and provides a product required and needed.

And now, it is incumbent upon the Department of Agriculture (by Statute) to insure that raw milk is contamination free and is of a pure quality just as they do all other milk. In this legislation, the Department has chosen to restrict the places of sale to areas that are probably most inconvenient to most consumers – I mean, how many people live next to a dairy? Or up the street? – just as they do all other milk. This is totally unfair to the consumers, to the processors, a dairy industry already being pushed out of the market. Limiting access is not the answer to anything – what about salmonella - will we eliminate the sale of peanuts - remove them from the market? etc

Raw milk is a necessary and desirable product for many Connecticut consumers and to have the Department of Agriculture denying them local access is totally the reverse of what needs to be done. The bottom line is that major, mega food industry giants, national and international would like to control the Connecticut (and national) milk market and this bill helps them to do just that.

I also believe it is wrong and don't believe the raw milk producers should be legislated out of business by requiring them to bear the expense of additional testing that other dairy farms are not required to do.

I firmly believe the Department of Agriculture has the responsibility and obligation to encourage and enhance the production of fresh Connecticut Milk – that is in the best interest of Connecticut Consumers.