

February 9, 2009

JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE ENVIRONMENT TESTIMONY

Re: HB-06312 and HB-06313, State Support for Raw Milk Regulation

Senator Edward Meyer, Representative Richard Roy and other distinguished members of the Joint Committee of Environment, I want to thank you for this opportunity to address HB-06312 and HB-06313.

I am speaking in favor of both bills and to tell you of the little known, little publicized horrors the consumption of raw milk brought to our lives this past summer. When other 2-year-olds were at the parks and beaches, my son was crippled in a hospital bed, his kidneys shutdown, fighting for his life. All because of negligent or less than responsible actions by the now defunct Town Farm Dairy in its milk handling practice. The Department of Public Health's report released on February 6, 2009 confirmed that the strain of E coli 0157 found in my son genetically matched the E coli 0157 strain found in one of the cows tested at the farm. If raw milk is safe enough to be sold on the shelves of the local grocery store, and does not need any further regulation, then how did this happen?

It all started when as a loving and caring mother I became concerned with a digestive ailment my son was experiencing. When recommendations from his pediatrician didn't work, I researched on the internet alternative treatments and learned of raw milk. In my findings, I was assured by many well-known doctors, authors, farmers, people who drink raw milk their entire lives, and even the Westin A Price Foundation, that drinking raw milk from a small organic farm with grass-fed cows is safe and beneficial. I read that organic, un-pasteurized milk naturally has antibacterial properties; making it virtually impossible to get a serious bacterial infection. Hence, when I saw that our grocery store was selling old-fashioned bottles of raw milk from a local organic farm, bottles that did not have any warning printed on them or near them, bottles nicely displayed right next to bottles of pasteurized milk, I once again felt assured that raw milk can't be that bad.

One can only imagine the horror I felt when just days after giving this milk to my son, he began to feel ill and have stools with blood and mucous every fifteen minutes. This lasted for the next 3 days before we admitted him to CCMC. They soon transferred him to the Pediatric ICU where he was diagnosed with Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) a complication caused by the virulent E coli 0157 strain. Our son required multiple blood and platelet transfusions, surgery to place a catheter in his neck for IV's and a catheter in his abdomen for continuous dialysis. He required an emergency CAT scan as his bowels were near perforation, and he did not eat or drink for days. We finally left the hospital after 3 weeks of intensive care and thousands of dollars in medical expenses. Today our son's condition is ongoing, and he requires medication, and the future of his kidneys is uncertain.

Unfortunately our horrific story does not end there, our 12-month-old daughter contracted E coli 0157 from hand to mouth contact with her brother during the time when we didn't even know he had E coli 0157. In turn, our dear friends' daughter contracted E coli 0157 from our daughter while they were caring for her when we were with our son in the PICU. I learned after the fact

that bacterial infections are easily spread among children under the age of five and are near impossible to contain when living in the same household. Our daughter was lucky in that she did not develop HUS. She only had the bloody diarrhea. Our friends daughter unfortunately had full-blown HUS and over a 2-week hospital stay.

The truth learned from this sobering experience is that no farm can guarantee the safety of raw milk with 100% certainty. Raw milk can become easily contaminated; and therefore, limiting sales to the farm and requiring responsible, clear labeling of this product is necessary to ensure that consumers fully understand its risks and to hopefully prevent a public health crisis in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kim Piccioli".

Kim Piccioli  
1681 Boulevard  
West Hartford, CT 06107