Ladies and Gentlemen of the Environmental Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

My name is Sister Telchilde Hinckley. I am a member of the Benedictine Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem CT. I hold a Ph.D. in Animal Science. The Abbey dairy has been licensed by the state as a raw milk and cheese retailer for 30 years and has long been designated a **Dairy Farm of Distinction.**

At the Abbey we feed 37-60 people on a daily basis. We are non-profit and we support ourselves. Our concern for food safety is not theoretical. We drink the milk our cows produce and we eat the dairy products made from their milk. Our state license signifies our desire to maintain professional standards. Other members of my community hold Ph.D. degrees in Agronomy and in Cheese Microbiology. Our dairy products have been the subject of a doctoral dissertation *and a Fulbright grant* which were documented in a PBS film. **The economic burdens of 6313 would impose excessive constraints on the livelihood and work of my Abbey. For our 5 cows alone, the annual cost would come to nearly $4000. I urge you to oppose *Bill 6313*. The state's proposals for enhanced testing at the expense of the producers exceed those of any other state, do not lead to increased food safety, and unfairly place the burden on small producers who may be forced out of business as a result.**

We know that milk quality begins long before the milk is in the processing room. My community is the **steward of 400 acres of land.** Our approach to the environment is **sustainable.** Our licensed dairy is integral to our land and to the educational outreach we offer to many schools and universities in Connecticut (for example, Trinity and Wesleyan). We regularly collaborate with the UConn College of Ag. This mutually beneficial exchange could not continue in the absence of the professional standards denoted by our status as **state-licensed**.

Analysis of the peer-reviewed scientific literature concerning fecal testing as a *predictor of milk quality* shows a very **poor correlation between pathogens found in manure and milk safety**. Fecal pathogens, if present, are excreted randomly. Quarterly fecal testing of milking aged dairy animals is purely a random sampling. In the Town Farm incident, the disease-causing pathogen was pursued in bovine fecal samples collected after the fact and required extensive testing to be isolated from the manure of one cow. Although the pathogen was never isolated in milk, there was clearly a tragic lapse in handling or hygiene that led to the outbreak of illness.

If there are conditions on farms that contribute to unsafe food production those conditions need to be addressed. This will be more effective than to make it economically impossible, ostensibly in the name of consumer protection, for small producers to maintain their licenses. Mandatory pasteurization could in fact

foster a false sense of security and lead to carelessness in handling. Raw milk is not for everyone, but **allow consumers to choose.**

In closing I invite you and other leaders in government to visit the few small farms in CT where licensed raw milk is produced and see for yourselves the care and professional standards practiced by these farmers, including those at my own Abbey.

Thank you for your attention

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Feb 9, 2009

Related Literature of Interest

USDA Agricultural Research Service:
"Dairy management Practices and the Transmission of Zoonotic Pathogens in Milk" Karns, J. and Van Kessel, J. project 1265-32000-078-00 Dec. 2005-Dec. 2010. Van Kessel and Karns have a number of publications associated with this project.

Oliver,S.P. et al. "Foodborne Pathogens in the Dairy Farm Environment: Food safety and Public Health Implications." Foodborne Pathogens and Disease 2005 vol. 2 no. 2

Ho, J. et al. "Listeria monocytogenes fecal shedding in dairy cattle shows high levels of day-to-day variation and includes outbreaks and sporadic cases of shedding of specific subtypes." Preventive Veterinary Medicine 2007 287-305