



May 19, 2014

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Oppose HR 4307 and HR 4308 allowing interstate direct sale of raw milk and milk products

Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

Due to the significant public health risks associated with the consumption of raw milk, the National Milk Producers Federation and the International Dairy Foods Association respectfully urge you to **oppose HR 4307 and HR 4308** introduced by Rep. Thomas Massie (KY-04). HR 4307 and HR 4308 would remove existing federal regulations prohibiting the direct sale of raw milk, consumption of which has been opposed by every major health organization, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Consumption of raw milk is a demonstrated public health risk. The link between raw milk and foodborne illness has been well documented in the scientific literature, with evidence spanning nearly 100 years. Raw milk is a key vehicle in the transmission of human pathogens, including *E. coli* O157:H7, *Campylobacter*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Salmonella*. In fact, the CDC concluded that unpasteurized milk was 150 times more likely to cause food-borne illness outbreaks than pasteurized milk, and such outbreaks had a hospitalization rate 13 times higher than those involving pasteurized dairy products.

The CDC has reported nearly 81% of raw milk-associated outbreaks have occurred in states where the sale of raw milk is legal. Removing regulations for the interstate sale of raw milk in the United States increases the risk to public health, opening up consumers to the inevitable consequence of falling victim to a foodborne illness. No matter how carefully it is produced and no matter how well-intentioned the dairy farmer, the direct consumption of raw milk is an inherently dangerous practice. Americans have become ill after consuming raw milk obtained from farms of varying sizes, from cow-share programs, and from licensed, permitted, or certified raw milk producers.

While some may frame this issue as one of personal choice and freedom, the reality is that the injurious consequences of raw milk consumption fall most heavily on children -- individuals who are without the ability to make informed choices about the foods they eat. In fact, nearly two-thirds of all outbreaks associated with raw-milk or raw-milk products involve children and 59% involve a child under the age of 5 years old. For example, in 2012, nineteen people in Oregon -- fifteen of them children -- were infected with *E. coli* O157:H7 after drinking raw milk. Four of the infected children required hospitalization with hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a serious condition that may lead to kidney failure, with one young girl having a stroke and eventually requiring a kidney transplant. Irreversibly compromising their quality of life is not a choice a child is capable of

making or would want to make, nor is the significance one that a parent fully and accurately comprehends when making the decision to purchase raw milk for themselves or their family.

Some groups favoring measures to increase the availability of raw milk for direct consumption have also attempted to position their cause as one in support of small farmers and local foods. It is notable, however, that the vast majority of America's 50,000 dairy farms are, in fact, small, family-owned operations whose milk for drinking purposes reaches consumers in under 48 hours on average. Most importantly, these same farmers – also serving local markets – want a public health program that recognizes the critical role pasteurization plays in making their milk safe for all consumers.

Another critical aspect of this high-profile issue is the tremendous amount of misinformation that has been disseminated regarding the supposed health benefits of raw milk. It is important to emphasize that no claim related to the health benefits of consuming raw milk has been substantiated in any of the peer-reviewed medical literature. The scientific consensus is that raw milk can cause serious illnesses and hospitalizations, as well as can result in life-long negative health complications and death.

Foodborne illnesses, like those due to consumption of raw milk, are preventable. To ease the regulations surrounding the nation-wide sale of raw milk is an unnecessary risk to consumer safety and ignores the benefits of pasteurization, considered one of the greatest public health triumphs of the 20th century. Legalizing and regulating the sale of raw milk sends a signal to consumers that drinking unpasteurized milk is safe when, in fact, the opposite is true.

The benefits of consuming raw milk are illusory, but the painful costs of illness and decreased quality of life are very real. Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose HR 4307 and HR 4308.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



James Mulhern
President and CEO
National Milk Producers Federation



Connie Tipton
President and CEO
International Dairy Foods Association

CC: United States House of Representatives

The National Milk Producers Federation (www.nmpf.org), based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 32,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies.

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C, represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies within a \$125-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA's nearly 200 dairy processing members run nearly 600 plant operations, and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85 percent of the milk, cultured products, cheese, ice cream and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States.