

# Kansas Dairy Association

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## House of Representatives Agriculture

**March 16, 2020**

Chairman Highland, and members of the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee, my name is Stephanie Eckroat and I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Dairy Association. I am appearing providing testimony on SB# 308

I am testifying today on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Kansas Dairy Association; this Board represents the 256 Grade A Dairy farm families in the state of Kansas. The Board has decided to remain **Neutral** on Senate Bill #308. We appreciate that the bill is a good start to a great conversation but feel the SB #308 does set expectations high enough to protect the health and safety of those individuals that consume raw or unpasteurized milk. The Grade A dairies in the state go through a rigorous licensing and inspection process in order to attain and achieve a standard that is recommended by the state and federal government. Inspections are regularly done throughout the year to maintain this high standard. This standard is a requirement to sell milk at the retail level. Inspections include cleanliness of facilities, cleanliness of cattle, proper temperature and storage of milk, bacteria levels, somatic cell counts, proper storage and use of veterinary treatments including antibiotic usage. Additionally, Grade A dairies also vie for Gold Standards set by their Milk Cooperative and Milk Marketing Associations that have even stricter rules and regulations concerning cleanliness and animal welfare. Why should those selling raw milk receive special treatment when the Center for Disease Control has shown that the consumption of raw milk can be a significant health risk, especially to those that have not developed a resistance to dangerous bacteria in the environment. There a possibility of sickness due to E.coli, Salmonella, Listeria and Campylobacter. The proposed bill is very vague as to what possible consequence there are from consuming raw milk. Unfortunately, many people in our society rely solely on social media and not science when it comes to making food choices. Unproper labeling and uniformed decision making is a recipe for disaster when it comes to raw milk. In addition, there are absolutely nothing in place to regulate or trace those producing and selling raw milk. Traceability of our food should be made a priority when it involves the health and safety of our population. This point is heightened considering our countries current battle with the Covid 19/ Coronovirus. This virus is a zoonotic disease that was initially transmitted from animal to human. In the early 1900's, pasteurization was utilized to combat the transmission of Tuberculosis from animals to humans through the consumption of raw milk. Society should be more proactive rather than reactive when it comes public safety. Science should be the bases for decisions when it comes to public safety, not passion.

I would point out, that during the testimony on February 12, 2020 in relation to SB #308, many of the raw milk producers indicated that they would welcome inspection of their facilities. I have been to one of these farms and have seen the level of care that goes into their product and facilities. I too believe that they could easily conform to similar standards of Grade A Dairy requirements in Kansas. Understanding that the cost to the Kansas Department of Agriculture could be expensive and is certainly not something that the State of Kansas is prepared for; the Kansas Dairy Association Board of Directors would propose a less intrusive and less costly solution. **The Board of Directors would propose a licensing and registration of these raw milk facilities. This would be a huge step in helping to track and provide traceability for the food source in question.**

In addition, not only am I speaking as a representative of the Kansas Dairy Association but also as a former dairy farmer and consumer of nutrient rich dairy products. For many years I consumed raw milk and served it to my family. It wasn't until I started doing my own research that I realized I could be putting us all at risk. I was very upset when I realized I could have also done damage to my unborn children. At that point my husband and I decided that is simply wasn't worth the risk, especially when there is no scientific documentation that unpasteurized milk has any health benefits above milk that has been pasteurized for food safety. In fact, pasteurized milk goes above and beyond raw milk, it is fortified with Vitamin D to help with the prevention of Rickets in humans. Milk was found to be a wonderful vehicle for humans to consumer Vitamin D pairing will with calcium which aids in the formation and strength of bones.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee might have on the position of the Kansas Dairy Association concerning SB #308.