

**Testimony to the
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources
February 12, 2020**

Chairman Kerschen, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Melissa Reed and I am the operations manager for Hildebrand Farms Dairy. I am appearing before you today on SB300.

It is an honor to visit with you about something I live and breathe every day. As a fourth generation dairy farmer I can give you a good glimpse of the day in the life on a dairy farmer. It's a life filled with cows, a little hard work and a constant focus on doing the right thing, whether it's for the animal, land or your family.

For years we sold raw milk from our farm. Customers traveled our dirt road with their glass pickle jar, plastic jugs or whatever else they could find that had a good lid. They threw \$2 on the desk for every gallon they took, and helped themselves to the bulk tank. The raw milk money was always a little extra, a few dollars here or there for a chocolate shake from in town or drink from the gas station down the way. I grew up drinking raw milk myself and to be honest in a side-by-side taste test I will always favor the raw milk over the pasteurized.

So with my background, why would I be interested in a raw milk ban? Well in 2003, a cousin from Switzerland came to visit our farm. He fell in love with our milk, like so many others. He drank and drank our milk and raved about the flavor. The same raw milk that I had grown up drinking, that I took great care to harvest from my girls, made my cousin extremely sick to the point that he was hospitalized and close to death. While I had heard about people getting sick from raw milk consumption this brought to light the reality of why we pasteurized milk to begin with. Raw milk is a known hazard. Raw milk can contain campylobacter, cryptosporidium, E. coli, listeria, salmonella all of which can cause extreme illness and even fatality, this is according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Our farm wanted to go about things the right way. We wanted to continue to make amazing milk that our local community could enjoy. In 2008, we took a leap of faith and built an on-site processing plant. This plant is State and Federally licensed and inspected to ensure every drop of milk we produce is safe to drink absolutely delicious. We are one of three on-site dairies available in the State of Kansas. In my time as a dairy farmer and processor I can tell you we take extreme measures to ensure we are compliant with the food safety regulations outlined by the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance. This isn't a simple make sure the equipment is clean policy. This extends to every aspect of our operation to ensure our milk is safe and our food supply is secure.

As the current law states. Anyone can sell raw milk off their farm. Well this is absolutely concerning as I personally have seen an increase interest in “homesteading”. People are taking interest in getting back to the land and raising their own food. While I don’t see a problem with this, it raises a red flag for me when I ask about their background or experience in the farm sector and they say they’ve been listening to several podcasts and watching Youtube videos and think they have it figured out. The safety and security of my pasteurized milk, versus my raw milk are in a different realm than the concern I have over someone who milks a cow into a 5- gallon bucket, pours that milk into their own container and then sells it for profit (even with a label that explains the sever risk the buyer is undertaking).

To sell food at a farmer’s market you must have a license, to sell food from a restaurant you must have a license, to sell meat you must be license and inspected, this most certainly should apply to selling raw milk off the farm. While a ban is in the best interest in terms of food safety and security of our food supply, I would be willing to compromise by stating that a dairy must be in good standing as a Grade A facility to sell raw milk. This keeps the market open, but ensures that all farmers are playing on the same level ground and that one person doesn’t create issues that rock the entire commodity market. I am in support of SB300 in hopes that we can agree that raw milk should have the same oversight as required by other animal based products in our state.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for your attention, I am happy to stand for questions.