



**Statement to the Maryland House Health and Government
Operations Committee Hearing on House Bill 3
January 28, 2014**

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Good afternoon. My name is Beth Briczinski, with the National Milk Producers Federation. I have degrees in Dairy Food Science, with a PhD in Dairy Microbiology. I have come before this committee today because of the significant public health risks associated with the consumption of raw milk.

NMPF, the nation's largest organization representing dairy farmers and the cooperatives they own, respectfully urges that you **oppose legislation** to legalize the sale of unpasteurized milk in Maryland. Through the use of cow-share programs, House Bill No. 3 would allow the state-wide sale of raw milk for direct consumption by the public. Every major health organization in the United States, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, opposes consumption of raw milk. So do federal health agencies like the Food and Drug Administration.

We pasteurize milk for a reason. Drinking raw milk is a demonstrated public health risk. The link between raw milk and foodborne illness has been well-documented, with evidence spanning nearly 100 years. Raw milk is a key vehicle in the transmission of human pathogens including *E. coli*, *Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, and *Salmonella*. The state should not create new opportunities for these bacteria to make people sick.

Nearly 75% of raw milk-associated outbreaks have occurred in states where the sale of raw milk is legal. Legalizing the sale of raw milk in Maryland would increase 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, raw milk is inherently dangerous. 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.

Tragically, nearly two-thirds of all outbreaks associated with raw-milk or raw-milk products involve children. The argument of raw milk proponents that they should have the right to consume raw milk overlooks the fact that children, who may also be given this product, are unable to understand the very real risks this presents to their health. It is the responsibility of

Maryland's leadership to make decisions to protect the health of the public, most especially young people who could be profoundly affected for the rest of their lives.

One unfortunate aspect of this high-profile issue is the tremendous amount of misinformation that has been disseminated regarding the supposed health benefits of raw milk. **No claim** related to the purported health benefits of raw milk has been substantiated in any of the medical literature. The only scientific consensus is that raw milk can cause serious illnesses and hospitalizations, and can result in life-long negative health complications and death.

While choice is an important value, it should not pre-empt consumers' well-being – especially when it comes to young Marylanders who are not equipped to make an informed choice. Legalizing the sale of raw milk to consumers, either through direct sale or through cow-share programs, is an unnecessary risk to public health. Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose House Bill 3.

Thank you.