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Attn: Representative Donovan, Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services and Committee Members

Testimony in Opposition to H 7441

An Act Relating to Food and Drugs- Milk Sanitation Code- Sanitation in Food Establishments
Before the House Health and Human Services Committee

Rhode Island Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental grassroots organization of farm families united to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans, and to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. Today our over 1200 members are not only large farmers and small farmers but also include those engaged in agricultural industries, teachers of agriculture, and consumers.

Rhode Island Farm Bureau is opposed in part and supports in part H 7441 on Milk Sanitation Code and Sanitation in Food Establishments.

American Farm Bureau policy supports only pasteurized fluid milk being sold or distributed for human consumption. We take no issue with the production of raw milk or raw milk products for personal consumption or consumption by immediate family members, however, we do not support the sale of raw milk to the public. As defined in this very Chapter, in 21-2-2.9, pasteurization exists to “destroy bacteria capable of transmitting disease to people.” Without this step, those consuming raw milk could easily be exposed to these unhealthy bacteria.

The cleanliness of a dairy and its animals does not guarantee the safety of its raw milk. Even dairy farms with very good safety practices can be affected. Healthy animals can carry illness-causing germs, such as Brucella, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, E. coli, Listeria, and Salmonella, that can contaminate milk. And even if tests on a batch of a farm’s raw milk come back negative, it is no guarantee that the next batch of milk will be free of harmful germs. RI Farm Bureau supports small-scale pasteurization for small farms that wish to sell their own milk from the farm. State-level grants to support these small dairy farms’ efforts would be welcome to help this process.

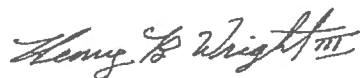
We would be willing to consider this legislation/change at such time that the RI Dept of Health not only sets up an inspection program for raw milk, in addition to TB and Brucellosis testing for dairy cows, and the equipment used at the farm is tested using the same guidelines any licensed RI milk producer shipping raw milk to a licensed producer must follow. Please see the attached list of guidelines from one of the large milk co-ops regarding what licensed dairy farms must adhere to ensure consumer safety and animal welfare. Other co-ops have similar if not the same standards.

Both Connecticut and Massachusetts allow for raw milk sales. Please see the attachment for an overview of these states’ guidelines.

RIFB Supports the addition of pickles and relishes to **21-27-6.1.(3)(i) Farm home food manufacture.**

The RI Farm Bureau also supports **32-1-23. Taking of mushrooms from state parks, recreational areas, and forests permitted.**

The Rhode Island Farm Bureau asks that you oppose the Milk Sanitation Code portion of **H 7441** to help preserve the safety of our RI food system and protect the health of those consuming milk in our state.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Henry B. Wright III".

Henry B. Wright III
President, RI Farm Bureau

Attachment: Raw Milk in CT and MA