

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

House Bill 16

"An Act relating to shared ownership; and relating to the sharing and sale of raw milk and raw milk products."

Sponsor Statement

Alaska is especially vulnerable to food shortages and supply interruptions because around 95 percent of food consumed in Alaska originates from outside Alaska. Improving food security is good for our state, good for local businesses, good for our economy, and good for health. House Bill 16 seeks to increase access to raw milk and raw milk products through herd share programs.

House Bill 16 would put language in statute that legalizes herd share programs and further expands the herd share programs to allow owners to receive raw milk products in addition to raw milk. Currently there is Department of Environmental Conservation regulatory language that permits farmers to sell shares of their dairy animals to the public and then the owners in turn receive a portion of the raw milk from the animal. However, farmers are not allowed to provide raw milk products, such as butter or cheese, to the herd share owners.

Regulatory language is relatively easy to change, and for this reason farmers are interested in formally legalizing herd shares with legislation. Furthermore, dairy farmers are always looking for opportunities to expand their operations and providing raw milk products to herd share owners is a natural next step. House Bill 16 addresses both issues, and by doing this will allow for small dairy farms to provide Alaskans with healthy raw milk and raw milk products through herd share programs.

House Bill 16 is modeled on successful efforts in North Dakota, Idaho and Colorado to legalize herd shares and allow for more value-added products to be provided as part of herd share programs. The nature of a herd share program provides farmers with every incentive to use the very best practices when milking and bottling raw milk and producing raw milk products. The legislation requires herd share members to obtain the product directly from the farmer or other herd share members.

Currently, Alaskans spend almost \$2 billion a year on food, but very little is spent on Alaska Grown items. Interest in locally produced food continues to grow in Alaska. House Bill 16 would guarantee that the herd share program will thrive, and farmers are able to provide Alaskans with high quality raw milk and raw milk products in the safest manner possible.

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