

April 15, 2021

Hello from Cottonwood Creek Farm!

My name is Suzy Crosby, and my husband and I own and operate a small farm in the Matanuska Valley. Our focus is dairy goats, and our herd share program provides delicious raw goat milk to consumers from Willow to Girdwood. We strongly support HB 22, which would allow other dairy products in addition to fluid milk, within the herd share framework. The accountability and open lines of communication, which are the hallmarks of the herd share concept, would remain unchanged.

I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to consider HB 22 in tomorrow's hearing. In the previous legislative session the original version of the bill, SSHB 16, came tantalizingly close to passage – unanimously approved by the House in 2019, heard in the Senate Resources Committee in March of 2020, but ultimately derailed by the pandemic shutdown shortly thereafter. We are hopeful that this year HB 22 will make it through the required formalities to become a reality.

Food security has been a topic of lively conversation among Alaskans for many years, and never more so than in the wake of a pandemic that cleared store shelves across the state during last year's frenzy of panic buying. (I must add that during that time, despite bare shelves in the dairy section, our herd share owners never missed a drop!) For that reason and more, Alaskans are increasingly seeking locally-sourced products, and hoping to join several other states such as Maine and Wyoming in expanding legal food choices, particularly in the area of milk and other dairy products.

HB 22 would offer benefits to consumers:

- Freedom to make their own food choices without restriction
- Having a variety of dairy options in addition to milk
- Many consumers prefer ready-made vs. DIY
- Access to digestible products for those who are intolerant to commercial dairy
- Opportunity to obtain specialty farmstead cheeses not available in stores
- Growing preference for unique locally made/artisan food

HB 22 would offer benefits to producers:

- Allow for best usage of seasonal surplus milk
- Farmer can buy more hay per gallon of milk (goats eat even during their dry period!)
- Products can be frozen and stored for later use with no loss in quality
- Specialty products would still be available in winter when fluid milk production drops

HB 22 would offer benefits overall:

- Strengthen Alaska's fragile food system
- Prevent food waste
- Expand Alaskan agriculture by offering a new business opportunity for farmers

This is a timely moment to take action by allowing value-added raw milk products as proposed by House Bill 22, thus codifying and augmenting what is already allowed under AAC 3.20.19. Prompt passage

would provide a perfect opportunity to make the best possible use of upcoming surplus summer milk, by turning it into other highly sought-after dairy products such as cheese, yogurt, and kefir.

Please.... Free the cheese! Thank you for supporting Alaskan agriculture.

Respectfully yours,

Suzy Crosby

Cottonwood Creek Farm

Suzy Crosby & Mike Pendergrast

907-357-7642 home (eves. & wkends.)

907-863-1276 cell

Email: packnmilk@ak.net

<http://www.localharvest.org/cottonwood-creek-farm-M52985>