

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

HOUSE BILL 22

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

SPONSOR STATEMENT

(Revised 1.28.21)

Alaska is especially vulnerable to food shortages and supply interruptions as around 95% of food consumed in the state must be shipped here. Improving food security is good for Alaska, local businesses, our economy, and for our health. House Bill 22 seeks to improve food security in Alaska by increasing safe access to raw milk and raw milk products through herd share programs.

House Bill 22 will put language in statute to formally legalize herd share programs. 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, this language is only in regulation, not statute, and is relatively easy to change. Farmers want the program to be protected by state law.

In addition to wanting assurances that the herd share program will not be changed or eliminated, farmers are always looking for opportunities to expand their operations and providing raw milk products to herd share owners is a natural next step. Through herd share programs, House Bill 22 will allow for small dairy farms to provide Alaskans with healthy, safe raw milk products in addition to the raw milk they currently provide.

House Bill 22 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. With a herd share program, the farmer has every incentive to use the very best practices when milking and bottling raw milk and producing raw milk products. The legislation would require herd share members to obtain the product directly from the farmer or other herd share members. This ensures safety because all consumers are known by the farmer and farmers are required to maintain a contact list of the herd share members.

Interest in locally produced food continues to grow in Alaska. House Bill 22 will 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 while at the same time increasing food security in the state.