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September 17, 2007

Senator Jeffrey E. Piccola
173 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Piccola,

As a practicing Family physician, a former large animal veterinarian, and Director of the Pennsylvania Agromedicine program I wish to express my opinion concerning the relaxation of inspection standards and requirements for distributors of raw milk in Pennsylvania.

It is my understanding that it has been proposed to weaken or eliminate the oversight, inspection and certification process of raw milk producers by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. I feel that this is not in the best interests of the citizens of Pennsylvania.

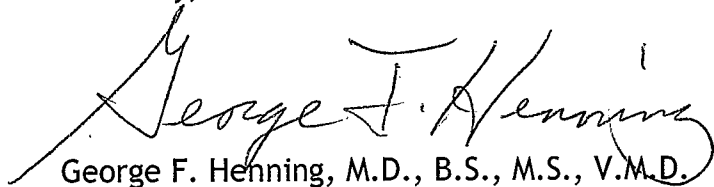
To begin, it should be pointed out that the process of pasteurization and the inspection and regulation of milk producers was originally developed and instituted in recognition of the role of milk consumption in such scourges of the past as Brucellosis and Tuberculosis. Largely through the institution of these measures these diseases have essentially been eliminated as public health problems, at least as transmitted by milk consumption. Milk was and still is a potential vehicle for transmission of disease. Pasteurization now eliminates almost all pathogenic organisms.

Raw milk retains the ability to expose consumers to several potentially serious disease causing organisms. This fact has been and continues to be well demonstrated. Inspection and certification are a critically important process in minimizing this threat to consumers of raw milk and many products produced from it. Diseases such as Salmonella, Campylobacter and E.Coli: 0157:H7 are common examples. Many of these do not pose a large threat to healthy immunocompetent adults under most, but not all circumstances. Much like Influenza, they are mild or moderate self-limiting problems to the healthy but potentially very, very serious or even fatal to the vulnerable. The vulnerable individuals include infants, young children, the immunocompromised and the elderly. These individuals may not even be able to make a choice in what they

consume, for example: infants, and children. Many immunocompromized are often not aware of their susceptibility and vulnerability especially from such a traditionally recognized wholesome food. The population of children and adults with decreased immune status is ever growing. These include those taking corticosteroid medications for asthma or other diseases, patients undergoing or having undergone chemotherapy, transplant recipients to name a few. Also, those with common chronic diseases are potentially susceptible and may not be aware of this susceptibility. This includes but is not limited to, diabetes, chronic kidney or liver disease, HIV infection, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune disease as well as others. They may not be aware of their vulnerability especially when dealing with a common nutritious product such as milk. Additionally, they could be served or unknowingly consume raw milk under many circumstances.

I am not a physician who discourages milk consumption among my patients able to tolerate dairy products. In fact, I recognize its nutritional value and encourage it. However, honestly, I do try to discourage raw milk consumption for all my patients. I know of absolutely no scientific basis for the oft heard claims of special health benefits of raw milk. The real and potential hazards are established and scientifically recognized. Fortunately, in part due to our present inspection process and sanitation standards, the negative health effects are uncommon. Let's keep it that way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George F. Henning". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and "H".

George F. Henning, M.D., B.S., M.S., V.M.D.
Associate Professor, Family and Community Medicine
Pennsylvania State College of Medicine
Director Pennsylvania Agromedicine Program

Cc: M. Brubaker, Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Chairman