



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage

8 July 2013

GOVERNOR

The 126th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 126th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1282, "An Act To Help Small Farmers in Selling Raw Milk Products."

I support the vast majority of the changes to Maine law contained in this bill. I also strongly support the underlying theory that Maine people should have unfettered but reasonable ability to conduct small business and grow those small businesses into larger operations. This bill exempts from state licensing and inspection requirements, raw milk producers who sell less than 20 gallons per day; the exemption applies to on Farm sales, as well as sales at farmers markets.

One of the primary roles of government is to protect public health. Maine's existing dairy program works to maintain a safe milk supply for the public. Dairy producers and raw milk sales are flourishing in Maine. Maine is one of thirty states that permit any sales of raw milk and one of only twelve states that allow the sale of raw milk in retail stores. Under existing rules we have seen a rise in the number of licensed small dairy farms that sell milk products other than to a plant for further processing from 13 in 1995 to 160 today.

I support a modified version of this bill where sales are limited to "on Farm only"; if farmers market sales are to remain, a mechanism to verify chain of custody must be included. Such face-to-face on Farm transactions should be promoted. The "on Farm only" approach would reduce risk to overall public health because consumers would know the farmer who produced the milk, see and inspect the farm and hold the producer accountable for foodborne illnesses that are associated with unpasteurized milk. It would at the same time, encourage more on Farm sales of raw milk without requiring a state license. This outcome would be a good balance – one I could support.

For these reasons, I return LD 1282 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,


Paul R. LePage
Governor



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