

## Senate Majority Policy Committee Whole Milk in Schools Hearing, June 16, 2021

Good morning Honorable Chairman and Committee. My name is Nelson Troutman. As a lifelong dairy farmer from Berks County, it means a lot to me and to other Pennsylvania dairy farmers that you are having this hearing today and to be able to share this story with you.

**We lost a generation of milk drinkers since whole milk was taken out of the schools.** People don't know about milk. They also don't know schools are only allowed to offer fat-free and 1% low-fat milk, that the kids don't like. As farmers, even our checkoff promotions that we pay for only promote fat-free and 1% low-fat milk.

After a listening session with the PMMB almost 3 years ago, some of us talked about doing something to let consumers know whole milk is not 50% fat or 10% fat or 100% fat. It is standardized at 3.25% fat. We didn't have a plan that day, and I went home frustrated. I looked around and saw I had what I needed to do something. I had wrapped hay bales.



**So, I painted one. Drink Whole Milk 97% Fat Free.** I put it in my pasture by the road. People asked me about it. They were surprised. I included some photos of the Milk Baleboard and some of my old milk bottles, how we used to communicate about milk. Today's packages don't tell people anything.

Soon other farmers wanted bales put out, and I painted over 50 of them. Some started painting their own, even from other states like New York. Bernie Morrissey had businesses donating to make banners and yard signs. Right away, the 97 MILK effort got going – all by volunteers and donations.

Since 2019, now more people are turning back to whole milk, but school kids still don't have a choice. If we don't do something soon, we'll lose another generation of milk drinkers and keep losing dairy farms, businesses, jobs and revenue.

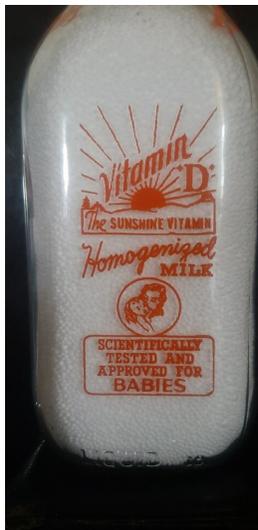
**Pennsylvania is a fluid milk state.** Fresh whole milk is our most local product.

Pennsylvania doesn't have 10,000-cow dairy farms. We have communities of small and medium sized farms -- Farms that are owned by families supporting their communities. We have the land and the water and the people who want to do the work. Dairy is 37% of our number one industry: Agriculture. Our dairies are struggling. Without them, we lose other businesses and jobs that support other parts of agriculture and the economy too.

**The Department of Agriculture is out of touch on dairy.** They give grants of \$400,000 to farmers to modernize their dairy farms, and these farms could get a termination letter at any time from their milk processor. They give \$400,000 in grants for farm-to-school education, but dairy is not even mentioned because they say milk is already in every lunch. But it's not the whole milk kids like.

Former Senator Scott Wagner told me I should go along on the garbage truck to schools and see how much milk is thrown away unopened. I would want our Governor and Secretaries of Agriculture and Education to go to a school at lunch time and see for themselves how much milk is thrown out. They can ask the students why, and they might be surprised by their answers because kids are brutally honest. Be sure to take the TV cameras along.

When children are served milk that they don't drink, then they aren't getting the nutrition. Instead, they buy something else, like Gatorade or Mountain Dew Kickstart. There's no fat in those drinks but also no nutrition.



**Pennsylvanians would be healthier** if children could choose whole milk at school. Study after study shows the benefits. Putting whole milk as a drink choice back in schools would cost the state's taxpayers a lot less money than other things we do. The benefits of whole milk sales would be huge -- better health, more revenue -- and we could save our Pennsylvania dairy farms. **It's a win-win.**

Thank you for listening, and please help us get the choice of whole milk back in schools.

