

Attachments—Additional Questions for the Record

Subcommittee on Health Hearing on “Improving Safety and Transparency in America’s Food and Drugs” January 29, 2020

**Tom Balmer
Executive Vice President
National Milk Producers Federation**

The Honorable Ann Kuster (D-NH)

I’ve visited family dairies around my district and heard from farmers about how important the DAIRY PRIDE Act is. Right now, they are being hit hard by tariff trade wars, more erratic weather and climate patterns, and other factors. The survival of these farms, some of them passed down in families for generations, is being challenged in ways never seen before. New Hampshire has less than 100 dairy farms with an average of 130 cows per farm. That represents a substantial decline in our state, even in just the last decade alone. That said, the perseverance and determination of these farmers is absolutely inspiring. And I’m proud to say milk remains the Granite State’s number one agricultural product. I think it’s very important to note that dairy producers are not trying to eliminate competition. Rather, they deserve to have their products accurately represented, just as consumers deserve transparency with what they are buying off the grocery store shelves. By definition, “milk” and dairy products come from cows and other animals. They contain a nutritional value that plant-based beverages do not. This distinction has public health implications, and it is important to correct the record on what is or isn’t milk.

1. With that in mind, Mr. Balmer, can you explain in detail the consumer confusion issue? Do you believe that consumers mistakenly think that plant-based products contain cow’s milk?

Thank you, Rep. Kuster, for this question and for your support of the DAIRY PRIDE Act. We fully agree with you regarding the importance of transparent labeling to provide accurate information to consumers as they make purchases in stores. To that point, we have argued that consumers do not have an accurate understanding of the nutritional profile of these alternative products relative to dairy products. Consumer survey data backs this up significantly. I noted in my testimony that a 2018 survey found that 73% of consumers surveyed have a false understanding of the protein content of almond-based beverages, mistakenly believing that such products have a higher protein content than milk when milk actually has up to eight times as much protein. A follow up survey found that half of consumers surveyed mistakenly believe that the main ingredient in a plant-

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based beverage is the plant itself, when in reality these drinks are mostly flavored water. Contrary to what others have stated, we have not alleged that most consumers believe plant-based products contain cow's milk.