

Wisconsin Cheese Maker Association: Advocates for streamlined dairy regulation in Wisconsin

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MADISON – Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) members and staff testified today in the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Agriculture and Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions in support of bills streamlining dairy industry regulation. Assembly Bill 747 and Senate Bill 685 would remove the state requirement that affidavits be collected annually, attesting that milk comes from cows which have not been given synthetic bovine growth hormone, or rBST.

“More than 90 percent of Wisconsin’s milk supply is now rBST-free, and it has been for years,” said Rebekah Sweeney, WCMA Communications, Education, and Policy Director. “Annual rBST affidavit collection is redundant and costly, and we applaud the bipartisan group of lawmakers working to reform this regulation.”

AB 747 is authored by Representatives Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City), Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), and Assembly Committee on Agriculture Chair Gary Tauchen (R-Bonduel), while SB 685 is authored by Senators André Jacque (R-De Pere) and Jeff Smith (D-Eau Claire). It also has the support of the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, which at the direction of Governor Tony Evers began a lengthy rule-making process to address industry’s concerns earlier this year. AB 747/SB 685 expedites the matter, with WCMA members are advocating for its approval in early 2020.

WCMA Policy Committee Chair Paul Witke of Zimmerman Cheese, Keith Braun of Agropur, Inc., and Scott Fahey and Nick Luth of Foremost Farms USA appealed to lawmakers in Wednesday’s hearings, detailing the impact annual affidavit collection

has on their businesses, and their farmer patrons.

“No other state requires annual rBST affidavit collection, so this regulation puts Wisconsin processors and producers at a competitive disadvantage,” said Sweeney. “Industry resources are stretched, due to recent economic pressures, and anything our elected leaders can do to alleviate regulatory red tape – while protecting consumer interests – is welcome.”

Today, WCMA also applauded the Assembly Committee on Agriculture’s approval of truth-in-dairy-labeling proposals, Assembly Bills 515 and 516, authored by Representatives Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) and Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua) and co-sponsored by Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green).