

PMMB

Testimony

John Painter

May 1st

1. My name is John Painter and I am a PA Dairy farmer. My family and I own and operate Painterland Farms, LLC in Westfield, PA. We milk 450 organic dairy cows and crop farm covering 5000 total acres; 3500 owned and 1550 rented. We also grow alfalfa, corn, oats, triticale, wheat and mixed hay for market sale. The original farm was purchased by George and Myrtilla Painter in 1940 and later John and Lynda took ownership in 1971. My brothers, Clinton and Bradley, joined and formed an LLC in 2015 and took ownership of the cattle and equipment on Jan 1, 2016. Son Jacob, nephews Bryant and McGwire, and niece Courtney, are employed and fully active on the farm. There are also a group of fifth generation children growing up and learning responsibility on the farm. Recently, in late 2021 the family helped two other nieces launch and finance their company *Painterland Sisters Yogurt*, in which, I strongly encourage you to try.
2. We are an example of one of many family dairy farms across the state. I am here today representing them. I am here specifically to discuss the milk marketing over order premium, and how it has become one of the many things working against the farmers in this state and how we have a chance to change it. PA used to be the 5th largest dairy state in the country, in which, in recent years, we have slid to number 8. We will continue this decline as we have not had the forward thinking in this state to protect the dairy farms in Pennsylvania. This once helpful premium has become a thorn in the dairy industry's side due to many market forces – from milk crossing state lines to neighboring state plants, to balancing milk for plants in other states and to the increased of the size of the dairy farm in PA.

3. The Over Order Premium began in 1988. (36 years ago) Since that inception, the dairy industry in this state has changed rapidly. What once was a good program, does not work for the majority of farmers in this state and is no longer fair and equitable. As a farmer, it is increasingly difficult to justify the existence of this premium to my fellow farmers.
 - a. 3 years ago, the PA Farm Bureau took a BOLD policy change to try to create movement on this premium program.
 - b. A PMMB board member announced at the PFB annual meeting to “give them time and there will be changes made.” He knew many people at that time had issues with the current system.
 - c. It’s been 30 months, with plenty of discussion back and forth and even movement in the House thanks to Rep. John Lawrence. After the house passed the Lawrence bill, the Senate Ag Committee held a hearing that I testified at as well as the members of this board.
 - d. Which brings us to today, to your proverbial house – PMMB board members. Where the 3 of you have the knowledge, wisdom and authority to set things right, fair and equitable, to do the right thing. Mr. Barley, you are the board member that was at PFB Annual Meeting 3 years ago and said “I hear you loud and clear, let me work on it and if I can’t help from my post I will be back to support your PFB policy.”
 - i. Ms. Kassimer, you sit on this board representing consumers and their best interest. Thank you for your willingness to tackle that daunting but admirable task. I have to ask you though, do you think consumers are being treated fairly and honestly when they are paying a premium on every gallon of milk they purchase with the assumption that their premium paid is going back to their local farmer? When in fact, less than 20% of the commonwealth’s dairy men and women actually

get that premium while out of state coops and independent bottlers like Walmart can take full advantage of both the minimum wholesale AND retail premiums? This is what many of us refer to as the “escaped premium.” The premium that has escaped Pennsylvania dairymen and women and landed in the pockets of the companies that this very legislation was supposed to protect us from.

ii. And that brings me to Mr. Van Blarcom. I have known Jim for many years and always respected his opinion and thoughtfulness on issues and forward thinking. I have found that to be true during his tenure on this board too. Jim, I want to publicly say thank you. Thank you especially for voting against the status quo the last two hearings and I’m hopeful you and your colleagues will again this time!

e. In this past two and half years we have also gained the support of -

- i. Pennsylvania Association of Dealer Cooperatives
- ii. Pennsylvania Dairy Association
- iii. PA Department of Ag, Sec. of Ag. Russ Reading

4. I finish with the solution in mind. As a farmer looking for resolution and change for the farmers across the state, I move to set the premium to \$0 for the next 6 months. In conclusion, I am asking you, the three PMMB board members, you have the authority to do this today, to bring all the parties together to create a solution, by pushing pause and setting it at \$0 for the next 6 months.