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Committees

Correctional Institution
Inspection Committee
(Vice Chair)
Government Oversight
(Ranking Member)
Energy
Community
Revitalization
Public Safety

Good Morning Chairman Creech, Vice Chair Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Agriculture committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 134.

In Ohio, home-based producers can currently sell food either under the state's cottage food exemption for shelf-stable foods or under the state's home bakery registration.

Under Ohio's cottage food exemption, home-based producers of shelf-stable food are exempt from licensing and inspection and may sell their food directly to consumers through grocery stores, to restaurants, at farmers' markets, at farm markets, and at festivals or celebrations organized by political subdivisions of the state that do not last more than seven days. Under the state's home bakery registration, home-based producers can sell only baked goods - perishable and shelf-stable - directly to consumers and at retail.

Perishable goods are only arbitrarily allowed to be sold under the home bakery registration, but it doesn't allow any other type of perishable food, even though the food is similarly safe to consume. For example, cheesecake can be sold in Ohio, but not other foods requiring refrigeration, like mac and cheese.

HB 134 proposes a solution by building another option for Ohioans – the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) registration. This option provides Ohio's home food producers with increase income potential by expanding the variety of foods that can be sold.

By implementing this MEHKO registration, we can increase food resiliency by providing new sources of food withing communities - especially in food deserts or when the national supply chains fail. It can also increase access to locally made products and unique foods for all population.

I would like to now turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Gross, to share the details of the bill.