



Written Testimony in Support of HB 134 - Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs) in Ohio
Submitted by COOK Alliance
April 4, 2025

Dear Chair Creech, Vice Chair Newman, Ranking Member Miller, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 134, which would create a legal pathway for Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs) in Ohio.

COOK Alliance is a nonprofit organization that spearheaded the legislation that originally created the MEHKO permit in California in 2018. Since then, we have been at the forefront of supporting permitted home-based culinary businesses. Through education, technical assistance, and collaboration with local governments and environmental health departments, we have witnessed firsthand how this program transforms lives- offering individuals the chance to build small businesses, support their families, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

MEHKOs provide one of the most accessible and affordable paths to entrepreneurship, especially for women, immigrants, and people of color who face barriers to entering the formal food economy. Legalizing home kitchens recognizes the reality that informal food sales are already taking place in our communities. By creating a legal framework, Ohio can enhance food safety and consumer protection while expanding economic opportunity.

Permitting home kitchens allows cooks to access food safety training and resources that are otherwise out of reach in an unregulated environment. It ensures oversight and provides traceability when issues arise- protections that do not exist in the informal food economy.

In the five years since the MEHKO program was enacted in California, it has maintained an excellent health and safety record. Across participating counties, concerns about foodborne illness, nuisance complaints, and neighborhood impacts have not materialized. As more jurisdictions continue to opt into the program, the results remain consistent: MEHKOs are safe, community-driven, and deeply beneficial.

A MEHKO framework in Ohio would create a more resilient and diverse local food economy, increase access to fresh food, and ensure that home-based cooks operate with the training, oversight, and support necessary to protect consumers.

We respectfully urge your support for HB 134 to bring these proven benefits to Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Roya Bagheri
Executive Director, COOK Alliance

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