

June 17, 2025

Representative Roy Klopfenstein, Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

Re: House Bill 134: Authorize home kitchen registration for sale of certain foods

My name is Nicole Arnold, and I am a Food Safety Specialist at The Ohio State University. I am testifying in my personal capacity, and not in my professional capacity. I possess a doctoral degree in Food Science and Technology and my research and outreach efforts focus on applied food safety. Food entrepreneurs are one of the primary groups I serve.

Ohio cottage food and home bakery laws and regulations currently do NOT allow the sale of freeze-dried foods, acidified foods, fermented foods, or low-acid canned foods. Previous testimony has suggested that this bill would allow these types of food products to be produced in Ohio home kitchens.

If these foods are not processed safely, bacteria can persist and grow, potentially resulting in illness, disability, or death of those who consume them. Specifically, low-acid canned foods and acidified foods have been attributed to botulism. *Clostridium botulinum* (*C. bot*) is different from other foodborne pathogens. Under certain parameters, *C. bot* can produce a deadly toxin. This toxin is tasteless, odorless, and colorless - so it is unlikely you would know you were consuming it. It is known to be one of the most lethal substances; it attacks the body's nerves and causes difficulty breathing, along with muscle paralysis.

Some of the processing methods and parameters for the types of products mentioned above are more complex than a method such as baking. For someone to safely produce a low-acid canned food, they would need a pressure canner to inactivate spores (dormant seeds) that could germinate and produce the *C. bot* toxin. Additionally, for someone to safely produce an acidified food, they would need to be able to monitor the pH (i.e., acidity), and if large food particles are included (like pickles), they would need to be able to monitor that the acid has penetrated those food pieces.

Someone without adequate knowledge of food processing and thermodynamics cannot determine whether a recipe and its parameters (e.g., time, temperature, thickness of food particles, whether pressure is needed) are safe. An individual called a Process Authority is generally the person to make these determinations. Several Land-Grant Universities employ a Process Authority to assist entrepreneurs with food processing and safety; however, The Ohio State University does not employ one.

Some states require food safety training when producing certain types of high-risk food products. Currently, Ohio does not require food safety training for cottage food and home bakery producers - but this is likely because the products currently permitted for home-food production are generally considered to pose a low-risk for making someone ill.

Food safety is essential to protect consumers from harm and protect home-food producers from liability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide food safety considerations for House Bill 134.

Nicole Arnold

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