



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE February 27, 2013

Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA, Commissioner (860) 509-7101

House Bill 5606 – An Act Concerning Home-Based Bakeries

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is opposed to House Bill No. 5606.

On a national level, there has been an increase in "cottage-type" food production businesses in an effort to provide economic stimulus and create jobs. Unfortunately, when these types of businesses are permitted to be operated by individuals with potentially no food production background, no food safety education, or inadequate food processing equipment, it diminishes the efforts of federal, state, and local regulatory agencies that are tasked with ensuring the food supply in our nation is safe for human consumption. Allowing individuals who lack appropriate food safety education and equipment to operate such businesses not only increases the risk for foodborne illness, but may also result in an increase in consumer complaints. Any such increase in reported foodborne illness would require utilization of additional resources within the DPH Food Protection Program, Epidemiology Program, as well as the State Laboratory.

Proposed House Bill 5606 does not specify whether these 'home bakeries' are to be regulated. While the Department of Consumer Protection licenses and regulates all Connecticut bakeries, some local health departments regulate those entities as well. If this bill is intended to exempt such businesses from regulation, it would further dilute the definition of 'approved source' by allowing foods produced without the benefit of a regulatory inspection program. Additionally, any such proposed home-based bakeries that are serviced by well water and/or on-site septic systems would need to be evaluated for appropriate use by the local health department having jurisdiction over the residential property, creating an additional burden not only for them but the homeowner as well. Fats, oils and grease (FOG) typically associated with the preparation of baked goods have the potential to be detrimental to a septic system, causing a potential failure and hence a public health nuisance and possible groundwater contamination. These failures could have a huge financial impact on an unsuspecting home-based business owner. Those residential properties that are serviced by municipal systems would need to comply with Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) regulations to avoid creating an additional burden on those systems under the DEEP FOG Permit, as applicable.

Federal, state and local food protection programs have advanced milestones in the past few decades and worked tirelessly to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness among our nation's population. House Bill 5606 weakens those efforts and puts the general public at greater risk. Therefore, the Department of Public Health cannot support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

*Phone: (860) 509-7269, Fax: (860) 509-7100
Telephone Device for the Deaf (860) 509-7191
410 Capitol Avenue - MS # 13GRE
P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134
An Equal Opportunity Employer*