

Strengthening local public health.

**Testimony of the Connecticut
Association of Directors of Health**



To Oppose Proposed House Bill 5027: An Act Concerning Cottage Food Production.

To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

February 17, 2015

CADH opposes *Proposed House Bill 5027: An Act Concerning Cottage Food Production*, if the intent is to allow food production for sale in personal kitchens. CADH supports efforts to promote small businesses and enhance community access to local food products. However, CADH does not support a bill that would pose significant and unacceptable risks to the public of contracting foodborne illnesses, especially when there are viable alternatives. Currently, anyone wishing to cook or bake food in a personal kitchen may do so by seeking permission to use an already licensed kitchen in the community.

Municipal health authorities and district departments of health inspect other food establishments throughout Connecticut to ensure safe food handling and sanitary practices. Such regular inspections are critical to protecting food products from contamination and keeping the public safe.

As a practical matter, local health departments would be unable to inspect personal kitchens with the same frequency or thoroughness, if at all, as food establishments completely separate from the home kitchen. In general, food establishments in Connecticut cannot refuse entry to a sanitarian wishing to conduct a food inspection. But residents have constitutional rights to refuse entry to sanitarians wishing to enter their *homes*. The existence of cottage food production would diminish the value and importance of the regulations required of licensed food establishments; they could simply circumvent the Public Health Code by refusing entry. This two-tier system could then undermine the ability of local health departments to regulate any food production, inside or outside of a personal kitchen.

Allowing cottage food production in inadequately regulated home environments could have catastrophic public health consequences. Cooking for friends and family is not the same as producing food for the public; and very few personal kitchens could comply with the Public Health Code. Without adequate oversight to ensure adherence with food safety protocols, there is nothing, for example, to ensure that foods are kept at proper temperatures before, during and after preparation.

CADH supports food production and food storage areas are completely separate from the personal home kitchen. This arrangement, arguably already allowed by the Public Health Code, enables local public health directors to ensure adherence to proper food safety protocols.

CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of Connecticut's 74 local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical providers of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.