

Senate Finance

05/11/2026

HB26-1033 Expanding the Colorado Cottage Foods Act

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Bennett Rutledge Against themselves	Chair Kipp and members of the committee, good morning, Bill HB26-1033 - Expanding the Colorado Cottage Foods Act was originally a good stimulus to budding food entrepreneurs. it has since been reworked and expanded government intrusion so as to eliminate all its original good points, and actually been made worse for Colorado overall. Vote NO on HB26-1033 - Expanding the Colorado Cottage Foods Act.
Elizabeth Alvarez For themselves	My name is Elizabeth Alvarez. I live in Denver, I'm a mother of five, and I'm the owner of Alvarez's Desserts. I'm here in support of HB26-1033. My goal is to offer healthier desserts, especially for people with diabetes and others who need to take care of their health, as well as for those looking for more accessible and nutritious options. I joined the Cottage Foods program in 2022, where I began selling at farmers markets. I started cooking from my home, then moved to the Metro Caring kitchen, and now I've had to rely on commercial kitchens. Currently, I pay \$150 per month for a membership, \$300 upfront to access the kitchen, and \$28 per hour every time I use it. There are also extra charges to use the oven, freezer, and refrigeration. For example, on Cinco de Mayo I sold cookies, pies, cheesecake, and juices at a farmers market. That day, I paid about \$410 for the

	<p>commercial kitchen, \$200 for help from two people, and \$120 for my table at the market.</p> <p>I made \$900 in total, but after those costs—without even counting ingredients—my profit was only about \$170.</p> <p>Without the cost of the commercial kitchen, my profit would have been around \$580. That difference is huge for a family like mine. This is the money we rely on to pay for rent, electricity, food, and gas.</p> <p>This bill is necessary so that people like me can grow our small businesses instead of being held back by costs we cannot sustain.</p> <p>If this program ends in two years, I would lose all the progress I’ve made. My business, my hard work, and my financial stability would be at risk.</p> <p>And it’s not just me—this would impact many people who depend on this pathway to build a business, especially those who don’t have the resources to open a restaurant or a large operation.</p> <p>That’s why I ask you to support this bill and remove the two-year sunset. Thank you.</p>
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Good afternoon, Madame Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Madison DeBruyne, and I am a community organizer at Metro Caring, an antihunger organization serving the Denver metro region. Since 2018, we have worked closely with small businesses and cottage food producers across Colorado. I am here today in strong support of House Bill 1033.

I want to begin by addressing concerns raised in previous committee hearings regarding foodborne illness. Some testimonies have implied that the Cottage Foods program is contributing to statewide outbreaks, citing overall outbreak numbers that have no documented connection to cottage food producers. It is important to be clear: there have been zero recorded foodborne illness outbreaks linked to Colorado's Cottage Foods program since its implementation in 2012.

Given this record, it is both inaccurate and unfair to associate unrelated statewide outbreaks with cottage food producers or to suggest that expanding this program inherently increases risk.

It is also worth acknowledging that some of the strongest opposition to this bill has come from commercial kitchen owners. Their testimony has framed HB 1033 as a public health threat, but these same businesses also stand to lose revenue if more Coloradans gain legal access to home-based food production. That financial stake does not invalidate their perspective, but it is important context when evaluating claims that are not supported by outbreak data.

HB 1033 strengthens food safety. The bill requires training focused on time and temperature control, registration with the Department of Public Health and Environment, and clear authority for oversight and enforcement. These safeguards modernize the program while maintaining strong consumer protections.

Colorado is also not alone in this work. At least nine other states allow the production of temperature-controlled foods, and states with broader programs—such as California—have seen minimal outbreaks associated with cottage food operations. When compared to the volume of outbreaks linked to restaurants and fast-food chains, cottage food-related illness remains exceedingly rare.

HB 1033 also addresses significant economic barriers by raising the annual revenue cap and tying it to inflation. Cottage food operations are not hobby projects; they are real small businesses that support household income and economic stability.

For many Coloradans—especially in low-income, rural, immigrant, and culturally diverse communities—the Cottage Foods program is one of the most accessible pathways to entrepreneurship. Yet current law prevents many producers from selling culturally significant

foods such as tamales, prepared meals, or refrigerated traditional dishes. Without legal avenues, people are pushed into informal markets or forced to pay \$1,000 to \$4,000 per month for commercial kitchen space, plus licensing costs—an impossible barrier for many families.

Home-based food businesses are often a first step toward economic mobility. They allow people to earn income from skills and traditions already rooted in their communities while keeping dollars circulating locally.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to vote yes on HB26-1033.

Thank you for your time and consideration.