



Testimony in Support of  
House Bill 535 - Food Establishments - Cottage Food Businesses - Maximum Annual Revenue  
Health Committee  
February 17, 2026

The Rural Maryland Council **supports HB 535 - Food Establishments - Cottage Food Businesses - Maximum Annual Revenue**. HB 535 updates Maryland's cottage food law by increasing the allowable annual revenue for a cottage food business from \$50,000 to \$100,000. This change reflects current economic conditions and provides small, home-based food businesses with a realistic opportunity to grow without immediately facing the costs and barriers associated with transitioning to a commercial kitchen.

Cottage food businesses operate from residential kitchens and are limited to producing specific, low-risk food products. These include shelf-stable items such as baked goods, candies, jams, jellies, and other non-potentially hazardous foods that do not require refrigeration for safety. The scope of allowable products is intentionally narrow, ensuring that public health protections remain in place while allowing small-scale food production.

For many rural Marylanders, cottage food businesses provide an accessible path to entrepreneurship where commercial kitchens, retail space, and economic opportunities may be limited or geographically distant. These businesses allow individuals to generate income locally, support community events and farmers' markets, and strengthen rural economies without requiring significant upfront investment.

Cottage food operators typically sell directly to consumers from their homes, at farmers' markets and public events, through personal or mail delivery, or to retail food stores as permitted under current law. Despite remaining residential in nature, many of these businesses reach the existing revenue cap due to increased costs and growing demand, rather than because they are operating at a commercial scale.

Raising the revenue cap to \$100,000 will allow rural and small-town cottage food businesses to grow responsibly, reinvest in their operations, and better support the individuals and families who depend on them. HB 535 supports rural entrepreneurship, strengthens local food systems, and acknowledges the realities faced by small producers while maintaining Maryland's food safety standards.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of HB 535.