

3/2/2026

Dear Members of the Assembly,

My name is Sagrario Ortiz, Founder of *El Poder de Ser Mujer*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the personal and economic empowerment of Latina women in the DC and Maryland metropolitan area. Since our founding in 2014, we have impacted more than 20,000 women through training programs, leadership development, and business development initiatives. Within that impact, we have provided specialized business development training in the food industry to more than 5,000 women—many of them mothers, immigrants, and heads of household who rely on gastronomy as their primary source of economic support.

We respectfully write to express our strong support for HB 1223 (2026), which would allow counties to designate official street food vending zones adjacent to farmers markets.

Why We Support This Legislation

Expands Real Economic Opportunities

Many participants in our culinary entrepreneurship programs have completed food handling certifications and have launched catering businesses or food trucks with great enthusiasm. This legislation would open legal and structured spaces where these entrepreneurs can grow, generate income, and serve their communities.

Promotes Local Business Development

Designating vending zones near farmers markets not only diversifies consumer options, but also allows small businesses to compete and thrive in a regulated and safe environment. This aligns with our mission to strengthen the economic security of women and immigrant families through training and meaningful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Respects Local Government Autonomy

HB 1223 does not impose a mandatory statewide policy. Rather, it grants each county the authority to decide whether to implement these zones based on their local needs, community characteristics, and priorities.

We believe this legislation represents a positive step toward fostering entrepreneurship, strengthening the local economy, and promoting inclusion for women-owned businesses, immigrant entrepreneurs, and low-income small business owners. Additionally, it will help formalize practices that already exist informally, providing clarity, safety, and sustainable growth.

For these reasons, and on behalf of our network of women entrepreneurs and small businesses, we enthusiastically support the passage of HB 1223 (2026).

Thank you for your attention and your commitment to our community.

Respectfully,

Sagrario Ortiz
Founder, El Poder de Ser Mujer