

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To ensure food safety and support small food entrepreneurs sell low-risk, non-perishable foods and home-cooked meals; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

1           **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act may be cited as the “Cottage Food and  
2 Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations Act of 2025.”

3           **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature acknowledges that the  
4 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is presently in a state of economic decline  
5 that is seemingly deteriorating given the idle tourism industry that the Commonwealth  
6 depends on solely. Furthermore, this depressed economic state adversely impacts the  
7 wellbeing and sustainability of all citizens and many business owners throughout the  
8 islands making it difficult to remain afloat. The Legislature finds that many small  
9 businesses within the Commonwealth can generate revenue using their culinary talents  
10 performed within their homes; however, it is difficult absent the necessary regulations in  
11 place.

12           The Legislature further finds that allowing sale of low-risk, non-perishable foods  
13 and home-cooked meals within the Commonwealth would assist small businesses that are  
14 at risk of shutting their doors due to the negative economic impact. Therefore, the purpose  
15 of this legislation is to support small food entrepreneurs by allowing sale of low-risk, non-  
16 perishable foods and home-cooked meals prepared at residential kitchens, while ensuring  
17 food safety through reasonable regulations.

18           **Section 3. Enactment.** Subject to codification by the CNMI Law Revision  
19 Commission, the following provisions are hereby enacted to read as:

20           **“Chapter xx. Cottage Food and Micro Enterprise Home Kitchen Operations.**

1           **§ 101. Definitions.** For the purposes of this chapter:

2           (a) “Cottage Food Operations” (CFO) means a home-based food business that  
3 produces and sells non-perishable, low-risk foods such as baked goods, jams, and dry  
4 snacks.

5           (b) “Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation” (MEHKO) means a home-based  
6 business that prepares and sells freshly cooked meals directly to consumers.

7           (c) “Direct sales” means sales made directly to consumers, including in-person  
8 transactions, farmers’ markets, and local online sales.

9           (d) “EHDP” means the CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention.

10          (e) “Indirect sales” means sales made through third-party businesses such as retail  
11 stores, cafés, and grocery stores.

12          **§ 102. Cottage Food Operations (CFOs).**

13          (a) Permitted Foods: CFOs may prepare and sell non-perishable, low-risk foods  
14 including but not limited to:

- 15                   (1) Baked goods (cookies, bread, cakes, pastries);
- 16                   (2) Jams, jellies, and preserves;
- 17                   (3) Dried fruits, nuts and seeds;
- 18                   (4) Dry mixes (spice blends, baking mixes);
- 19                   (5) Granola and cereal bars; and
- 20                   (6) Other foods determined by the CHCC Environmental Health Disease  
21 Prevention (EHDP).

22          (b) Registration and requirements: CFOs may operate under the adherence of the  
23 following:

- 24                   (1) CFOs must register with the EHDP and renew registration annually.
- 25                   (2) CFOs must complete a food safety training course and obtain a food  
26 handlers certificate from the EHDP.
- 27                   (3) CFOs must properly label all products with:
  - 28                           (i) Business name and address;
  - 29                           (ii) List of ingredients;

1 (iii) Allergen warnings (if applicable); and

2 (iv) A statement that the product was made in a home kitchen.

3 (c) Cottage Food Operation Categories: CFOs may operate under the following  
4 classified categories:

5 (1) Class A: Permitted for direct sales only (e.g., from home, at farmers'  
6 markets, or via local online sales for home delivery).

7 (2) Class B: Permitted for both direct and indirect sales (e.g., selling to  
8 stores, cafés, and restaurants).

9 **§ 103. Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs).**

10 (a) Permitted activities: MEHKOs may prepare and sell freshly cooked meals from  
11 a home kitchen, limited to:

12 (1) Breakfast, lunch or dinner;

13 (2) No pre-packaged or mass-produced foods; and

14 (3) No wholesale or third-party sales.

15 (b) Regulations and requirements: MEHKOs may operate under the adherence of  
16 the following regulations and requirements:

17 (1) CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention:

18 (i) MEHKOs must obtain a permit from the EHDP to be renewed  
19 annually; and

20 (ii) A home kitchen inspection is required before approval;

21 (2) Sales limit:

22 (i) Total annual sales may not exceed \$50,000; and

23 (ii) No more than 30 meals per day or 60 meals per week (subject to  
24 adjustment by EHDP).

25 (3) Food safety standards:

26 (i) One full-time food handler (owner or employee) must be certified  
27 in food safety;

28 (ii) Meals must be prepared and sold on the same day—leftovers  
29 may not be stored for future sales; and



1 (iii) Proper sanitation and food handling must be maintained at all  
2 times.

3 **§ 104. Exemption From Commercial Utility Rates.**

4 (a) Notwithstanding any law or regulation to the contrary, any business operating as  
5 a CFO or MEHKO shall be exempt from commercial rates for the use of electric, water  
6 and wastewater, and shall be assigned residential rates for electric, water, and wastewater  
7 usage.

8 (b) Any business operating as a CFO or MEHKO must provide necessary  
9 documentation as requested by the utility provider as proof to confirm eligibility for this  
10 exemption. This exemption shall remain in effect as long as the business maintains the  
11 necessary qualifications and requirements provided in this chapter.

12 **§ 105. Enforcement and Penalties.**

13 (a) Inspection and compliance: CFOs and MEHKOs may operate under the  
14 adherence of the following enforcement requirements:

15 (1) The EHDP may conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance.

16 (2) Violations may result in fines, suspension, or revocation of permits.

17 (b) Penalties:

18 (1) Any person who violates a provision of this act or operates without  
19 registration or a permit shall be fined \$1,000 per violation.

20 (2) Repeated violations may result in a prohibition from operating a CFO or  
21 MEHKO.

22 **§ 106. Implementation.** The CHCC Environmental Health Disease Prevention  
23 shall establish regulations and procedures to implement this Act within six (6) months of  
24 its effective date.

25 **Section 4. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such  
26 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent  
27 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or  
28 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.

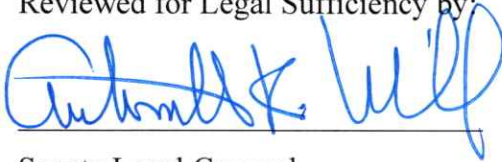
1        **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not  
2 be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under  
3 statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes.  
4 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant  
5 to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any  
6 way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the  
7 date this Act becomes effective.

8        **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
9 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

Date: 03/07/25

Introduced By:   
Senator Donald M. Manglona

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:



Senate Legal Counsel