March 20, 2025
Room 308, House Office Building
Lansing MI 48909

RE: Strong Support of House Bills 4122

Dear Chairman Neyer and Members of the Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of Rising Voices, an advocacy organization dedicated to organizing and developing the leadership of Asian American women, young people, and families in Michigan, we write to express our strong support for HB 4122, a bill that will modernize Michigan's Cottage Food Law and expand economic opportunities for small food entrepreneurs across the state.

HB 4122 is a crucial step in fostering entrepreneurship, supporting immigrant, minority, and women-owned small businesses, and strengthening Michigan's local food economy. Women make up 47.7% of Michigan's small business workforce and own 43.3% of small businesses, while Asian Americans own 4.1% of small businesses in the state. These entrepreneurs are eager for modernized regulations that allow them to compete, grow, and sustain their businesses.

Food is central to Asian American culture, identity, and heritage—it is how families express love, preserve traditions, and share history across generations. For too long, Asian food was labeled as "exotic," "novel" or met with lunchroom taunts, despite its deep significance to our communities. Now, after years of marginalization, Asian cuisine is finally receiving the recognition it deserves, and talented food entrepreneurs are embracing their heritage and sharing their culture through food.

For many Asian American entrepreneurs and other small food business owners, Michigan's current Cottage Food Law creates unnecessary barriers to growth. The existing $25,000 revenue cap, ban on online sales, and requirement to list home addresses on product labels have severely limited the ability of entrepreneurs—especially those from immigrant communities—to turn their food businesses into viable economic ventures.

Why HB 4122 Matters for Michigan's Small Business Economy

- Many Asian American and immigrant entrepreneurs start their businesses from home due to the high capital costs associated with opening storefronts. This bill gives them a fair chance to grow and test the market before making large financial commitments.
    - The bill increases the gross sales threshold from $25,000 to $50,000, with businesses that sell products priced at $250 or more per unit able to earn up to $75,000 annually, enabling more entrepreneurs to reinvest in their businesses and move toward long-term sustainability.

- In the wake of the pandemic, small food entrepreneurs have increasingly relied on digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to promote their businesses and interact with customers. However, Michigan's outdated Cottage Food Law still prohibits online sales and shipping, putting our entrepreneurs at a competitive disadvantage compared to businesses in other states.
- HB 4122 allows online sales, mail orders, and third-party delivery services, enabling Michigan entrepreneurs to reach more customers.
- Currently, Michigan law requires home-based food businesses to display their personal home addresses on product labels—a serious safety concern, especially for women and entrepreneurs from vulnerable communities.
- HB 4122 creates an optional registration system with the MSU Product Center, allowing businesses to use a registration number instead of their home address.

Other states—including California, Arizona, and Vermont—have successfully modernized their cottage food laws without compromising food safety. Michigan should follow suit and allow its small businesses to compete on a level playing field.

In today's divisive political climate, we are encouraged to see that HB 4122 has earned broad bipartisan support, demonstrating that investing in small businesses and economic development are issues that unite lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. We believe that Michigan's leaders can and should come together to remove outdated restrictions, empower entrepreneurs, and help local businesses thrive.

We strongly urge the committee to pass HB 4122 and advance it through the legislative process. This bill is an opportunity to support small businesses, empower immigrant and minority entrepreneurs, and modernize Michigan's food laws in ways that reflect the realities of today's economy.

We appreciate your leadership and consideration of this important issue. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the impact of this bill further, Rising Voices stands ready to support efforts that uplift Michigan's Asian American small business community.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Rivera
Executive Director
Rising Voices