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To: Michigan Senate Agriculture Committee

Re: HB 5280 and HB 5837

The Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance (MOFFA) Board of Directors is pleased to express support for the 'Cottage Food Bills,' HB 5280 and HB 5837. If these bills become law, they will help foster entrepreneurial agriculture, food access and security, and localized food networking.

Entrepreneurial agricultural enterprises are becoming more and more vital to the survival of small and medium scale farms. Many farms face the choice of creating new 'value-added' products and finding niche markets, or of selling the farm, sometimes after many generations of farming. The Cottage Food Bills will allow farmers and food entrepreneurs to test new products without the large and sometimes prohibitive expense of setting up a certified commercial kitchen. This will drastically lower the risk in developing new products that have the potential to help keep a farm profitable. The end market for these products might be local, regional, national, international, or a combination of these markets.

The lack of ability to access and secure nutritious foods on a regular basis is a challenge for many people in Michigan. The Cottage Food Bills have the potential to significantly increase the availability of healthy food to people by granting them the ability to buy and sell from each other in their own neighborhoods and locales.

Localized food networking is the type of healthy economic activity that can help to revitalize Michigan's economy. In a localized network, people begin to support each other's businesses (agricultural and other) and advertise each other's services to their friends and neighbors. Farmers sell products to each other, and support businesses of the people that buy their products. Commerce of this sort strengthens community ties and leads to a more robust local economy.

The Cottage Food Bills will help organic and non-organic farmers with their necessary development and marketing of value-added products. The bills will stimulate the rural economy, as well as the urban and suburban economies and marketplaces, both by creating localized activity and by aiding in the development of new agricultural enterprises. HB 5280 and HB 5837 fit with MOFFA's mission and the Board of Directors is happy to support these bills.

Sincerely,

Chris Bardenhagen
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance Policy Chair