

Item 14
6/30/2026 BOS
Meeting

From: Lauren Wolfer <lauren@cookalliance.org>
Sent: Friday, June 26, 2026 7:34 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: Public Comment for June 30 Board Meeting – Item 14 (MEHKO Pilot Program)
Attachments: COOK Alliance Letter to Fresno County Board of Supervisors re_ MEHKO Program (Item 14).pdf

CAUTION!!! - EXTERNAL EMAIL - THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

Report Suspicious

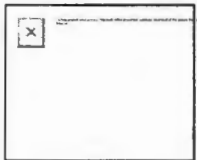
Dear Clerk of the Board,

Attached please find a letter from COOK Alliance regarding Item 14 on the June 30, 2026 Board of Supervisors agenda, the proposed Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) pilot program.

We respectfully request that this letter be entered into the public record and provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

Thank you for your assistance.

Best,
Lauren



Lauren Wolfer
Policy Director
cookalliance.org
760-831-6553
she/her



June 25, 2026

Dear Chair Bredefeld and Members of the Board,

I am writing on behalf of COOK Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting home-based food entrepreneurs, to strongly encourage Fresno County to adopt the proposed Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) pilot program.

A MEHKO is a small, permitted home-based food business that allows residents to legally prepare and sell meals directly to consumers from their own home kitchens under Environmental Health oversight. Operators are required to obtain permits, complete food safety training, and comply with inspections and other public health requirements.

Our organization works closely with both MEHKO entrepreneurs and environmental health agencies across California, and we have closely followed the program since it was first authorized in 2019. Comprehensive evidence shows that the MEHKO program is safe and effective, that it is making local food systems safer by providing a regulated alternative to the informal food economy, and that it is helping Californians launch new small businesses and generate needed income.

Many Fresno County residents are looking for practical ways to supplement their income and build greater financial stability. For parents, caregivers, retirees, veterans, people with disabilities, and aspiring entrepreneurs without access to significant capital, opening a traditional food business is often financially out of reach. The MEHKO program creates an affordable pathway into entrepreneurship without subsidies or government assistance. It simply gives residents the opportunity to use their skills to generate income while complying with permits, inspections, business licensing, and food safety requirements.

Importantly, home cooks are already preparing meals for customers throughout Fresno County. However, because the County has not yet authorized a MEHKO program, this activity currently operates without any formal food safety oversight or accountability. By creating a realistic pathway to compliance, the proposed pilot would strengthen food safety while supporting residents who want to operate responsibly.

Research has found strong economic outcomes within the MEHKO program, including that approximately one-third of operators used the permit as a stepping stone into larger food businesses such as catering operations, food trucks, and brick-and-mortar restaurants. In doing

so, they become customers of commissary kitchens, suppliers, and other local businesses, strengthening the broader food economy. The program has also created meaningful entrepreneurial opportunities for women, who represent 70% of MEHKO operators, a substantially higher share than among new entrepreneurs nationally.

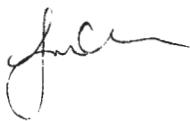
It's also important to note that Fresno County would not be embarking on an experiment. The MEHKO program is neither new nor untested. Research evaluating the program's first five years, conducted in partnership with the University of Washington, found that 97% of permitted MEHKOs received no complaints related to food safety, noise, traffic, parking, or other neighborhood concerns, and identified no confirmed foodborne illness outbreaks. Furthermore, every jurisdiction that initially adopted MEHKOs as a pilot has since voted to make the program permanent. In each case, county staff reported that the concerns raised before implementation simply did not materialize in practice.

Ultimately, this is a question of opportunity, as well as an individual and property rights issue. Why should a Fresno County resident be prohibited from safely preparing and selling meals from their own kitchen when that same activity is legal and regulated in counties across California?

We respectfully encourage the Board to ground its decision in the experiences of jurisdictions that have already implemented the program and the growing body of evidence demonstrating its safety and success. Approving the proposed MEHKO pilot program will strengthen public health while expanding opportunities for entrepreneurship in Fresno County.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lauren Wolfer
Policy Director
COOK Alliance

Item 14
6/30/26 BOS Meeting

From: Esau Flores <eflores@calrest.org>
Sent: Friday, June 26, 2026 11:05 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Cc: District 3; District 1; District 2; District 5; District 4
Subject: CA Restaurant Association - MEHKO Comment Letter
Attachments: Agenda Item.pdf; Fresno County MEHKO Letter 06.26.pdf

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Hello,

The California Restaurant Association (CRA) would like to submit this formal comment letter regarding Fresno County's Board of Supervisors' June 30th, 2026, meeting. Specifically, regarding Board Agenda Item 14 - Proposed Amendment to the Ordinance Code of Fresno County, Adding Chapter 8.51 "Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations."

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Esau Flores
Legislative Coordinator

California Restaurant Association
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 2000
Sacramento, CA 95814

T: 916.431.2774
eflores@calrest.org



While all information released by the California Restaurant Association (CRA) is intended to provide accurate information on the subject covered, the CRA does not provide legal advice and any information provided by the CRA shall not constitute legal advice. You are encouraged to consult your attorney, accountant, or other appropriate professional, as needed.

Confidentiality note:

This electronic message transmission contains information from the California Restaurant Association which may be confidential or privileged. The information is intended to be for the use of the individual or entity named above. If you are not the intended recipient, be aware that any disclosure, copying, distribution or use of the contents of this information is prohibited.

If you have received this electronic transmission in error, please immediately notify us by telephone at 800.765.4842.

Restaurants are fiercely regulated, and rightfully so – food preparation is a massive responsibility, and we regulate as such in commercial settings. Accessibility also remains an issue as restaurants are required to adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Ultimately, the CRA urges the County not to set a double standard for kitchens that would forgo the health and safety of our communities by allowing a MEHKO program to exist without addressing key issues. As part of this, we urge the County to increase the frequency of inspections and make them unscheduled, as they are for other food establishments like restaurants.

II. Infrastructure and Environmental Stewardship

Today, restaurants are mandated to install and maintain grease trap interceptors within each food facility, preventing excess fats, oils, and grease from entering the municipal sewer systems and existing plumbing lines – ultimately avoiding sewage spills and harmful impacts to the environment. Should a large quantity of MEHKOs be approved within one residential area, the impacts could be severe, including irreparable harm to the surrounding environment from resulting sewage backups, should disposal of certain products happen improperly. Ultimately, our sewer systems were not designed with MEHKOs in mind.

Additionally, under state legislation such as SB 1383 (2016), restaurants are required to partner with food recovery organizations to donate any excess food – subject to restrictions.

Additionally, under SB 1383, certain restaurants also follow organic waste recycling practices to reduce emissions. The CRA questions whether these MEHKOs would be required to follow the same standards that many restaurants are subject to. If not, this is a clear policy decision to enable a two-tier enforcement model that puts restaurants at a significant disadvantage and undermines the state's environmental goals.

III. Traffic and Parking

If individuals begin operating a micro-enterprise kitchen out of their home, it could lead to significant traffic, circulation, and parking impacts within surrounding neighborhoods. This could pose particular issues in a multi-unit residential community. Properly zoned restaurants have minimum parking space requirements, with zoning restrictions that take into account traffic volume, as well as flow, as designed by city planners.

IV. Strained Resources & End of Local Assistance

AB 178 – Budget Act of 2022, established a grant program that is currently administered by the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH). However, this grant program is set to end in the fall of this year, with CCDEH stating that an extension of the grant program is unlikely. Given this, if the County establishes a pilot MEHKO program, it will be unable to utilize grants that other jurisdictions received to offset the cost of establishing such a program.

This raises serious concerns for the CRA, especially as the County faces a \$300 million deficit for the next fiscal year and looming departmental cuts. The CRA is concerned that any additional resources required to regulate a pilot MEHKO program could result in raised environmental

health fees for existing brick-and-mortar restaurants – forcing them to subsidize the cost of MEHKOs. This, of course, would be wholly inappropriate. While we acknowledge that the MEHKO program is intended to be self-funded, we want to caution that this intention may not be realistic.

V. Enforcement and Implementation Concerns

While there are restrictions outlined in statute regarding what and how much a MEHKO can sell, along with other limitations, the CRA has serious concerns regarding the enforcement of such restrictions. How would the County ensure that these limitations are not exceeded? While there are record-keeping requirements, there are various ways to circumnavigate these mandates for MEHKOs. This is particularly concerning given that the ordinance provides for only one routine, scheduled, annual inspection.

There are further considerations regarding the operation of a MEHKO, including alcohol service, food delivery, and a laundry list of other factors and restrictions that MEHKOs face. Without adequate resources, the County will be unable to carry out adequate and fair enforcement. Who will ensure that alcohol is not unlawfully served or sold and that delivery restrictions are followed? Furthermore, how will the cap on sales be enforced if compliance relies upon operator-reported records, with no way to cross-reference transactions?

A majority of counties have not opted in for many of the reasons and questions raised in this letter. In response to this, Assembly Bill 2315 (AB 2315) would have mandated every local jurisdiction to create a MEHKO program, irrespective of the limitations that we've outlined in our letter thus far. AB 2315 died in the state legislature, and the CRA urges the County to consider lessons learned from other jurisdictions and consider the fact that the vast majority of the state's 58 counties have not opted into this program.

VI. Labor protections

California has some of the most robust labor laws in the nation, with oversight provided by both the state and local bodies. However, if MEHKOs are allowed to operate, how will Fresno County ensure that the same labor protections and standards that restaurants are held to will also be followed by MEHKOs? The reality is that while "household members" do not need to be paid, who will ensure proper and timely payment of wages for the one full-time employee, for whom MEHKOs are allowed under this pilot? How will overtime pay be enforced? Mandatory meal and rest breaks are required by California law. How will those laws be enforced behind closed, private doors? These are just a few of the questions that are imperative for the County to address.

VII. Struggles of the Industry

CRA's members have stressed that current pressures have made operating brick-and-mortar restaurants borderline untenable. A survey of our members noted that over 40 percent were not profitable. Over the past years, restaurants have struggled with 40-year high inflation rates, escalating wage pressures, excessive rents, tariffs, reduced foot traffic, and increased layers of regulation at both the state and local levels.

Brick-and-mortar restaurants operate as one of the top sales tax generators for local jurisdictions – tax generators that help fund first responders, libraries, and other local resources. Efforts should be made by the County to nurture the brick-and-mortar restaurant community, not efforts that would effectively compromise public food safety and create an avenue for restaurant-like operations, but without all the responsibilities, costs, and restrictions.

Given the challenges raised – and questions not yet answered, we would welcome the County to consider ways to help the existing restaurant community, one of the most diverse employer communities around. More than 80% of restaurant chefs, a senior role, are people of color; nearly 70% of managers and supervisors are people of color; and 60% are owned by people of color.

VIII. Conclusion

The CRA urges the County to consider these challenges as it deliberates whether to move forward with establishing a pilot MEHKO program. Restaurants follow strict health, safety, environmental, and accessibility requirements. By establishing a program that does not hold MEHKOs to comparable standards, the County would forgo decades of best practices for food service businesses and undermine a community that remains a highly productive partner and leader in local sales tax generation.

Given the critical nature of these questions, we must respectfully ask that the County not move forward with the proposal to establish a MEHKO pilot program until these crucial questions are adequately answered. We also encourage the County to explore alternative methods, such as commissary kitchens, which provide lower barriers to entry, make enforcement more practical, and remove the challenges and secrecy that come with operating behind closed, private doors with extremely limited oversight from local public health officials.

Sincerely,



Matt Sutton
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs & Public Policy
California Restaurant Association

Cc: Supervisor Pacheco – District 1
Supervisor Bredefeld – District 2
Supervisor Chavez – District 3
Supervisor Mendes – District 4
Supervisor Magsig – District 5

Item #14
6-20-24



FRESNO COUNTY MEHKO COALITION

June 29, 2026

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
2281 Tulare Street, #301
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Members of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors,

We, the undersigned organizations and community members, are writing to express our strong support of Fresno County opting into AB 626, the Homemade Food Operations Act, and the implementation of Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) permitting in Fresno County. Assembly Bill 626 passed into law in 2018 and became effective on January 1, 2019. AB 626 allows home cooks to apply for a Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations ("MEHKO") permit to legally sell food directly to the public from a home kitchen. AB 626 builds upon the success of the Cottage Food Law, which enabled home cooks to legally sell baked goods and shelf-stable items. AB 626 requires each County to opt-in to the policy to authorize this type of food facility. Riverside County was awarded the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Challenge Merit Award for the innovation they showed in being the first in the state and nation to implement permitting of MEHKOs. Since then, 17 counties and 1 city have adopted

MEHKOs such as San Benito, Sonoma, Solano, Los Angeles, Sierra, San Diego County with many more in progress. As such, we look to Fresno County to pass a resolution option into AB 626 and become the first county in the Central Valley to adopt MEHKOs.

The MEHKO permit system would provide burgeoning food entrepreneurs with an opportunity to generate income and test their business models at minimal cost. By lowering the barriers to entry for incubation of food enterprises, MEHKOs will contribute to local economic development and create legal pathways for entrepreneurship in our local food system. This opportunity will also expand access to healthy meals in neighborhoods that are limited to fast food and unhealthy food options - many families simply don't have time to cook for themselves and don't have affordable, nutritious alternatives available. MEHKOs can help solve this problem.

Additionally, a MEHKO program would regulate the informal food economy that already exists in Fresno County. Regulation would protect consumers and improve public health standards, by requiring inspection, safety training, business licensing, and payment of applicable taxes and fees.

Finally, the California Legislature allocated \$8 million to bolster the state's MEHKO program through the California Workforce Development Board grant program. A substantial portion of these funds were made available as pass through equity grants to help MEHKOs start or support their businesses. A MEHKO program should be considered an integral piece of a comprehensive economic opportunity policy initiative. By opting into AB 626, Fresno County can both create economic mobility and bring this funding into our community. Furthermore, within this budget allocation, there are funds designated to assist local agencies in reimbursing the cost associated with developing and implementing a MEHKO program, and we urge the Board to capitalize on this limited funding opportunity.

In summary, this bill will improve public health safeguards, increase healthy food access and legitimize an important level of economic empowerment and equity for our emerging food entrepreneurs. Please support the implementation of AB 626 in Fresno County. We encourage the county to act with urgency to capitalize on available funding, ensuring timely implementation for maximum impact.

Sincerely,

Genoveva Islas, MPH
Founder & Executive Director, Cultiva La Salud

Keith Bergthold
CEO, Regenerate California Innovation (RCI)

Lynisha R. Senegal
Advocate for Entrepreneurs
Helping Others Pursue Excellence
Vision View Business Formation Center

Jesus Martinez, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Central Valley Immigrant Integration
Collaborative (CVIIC)

Sandra Celedon, MPH
President & CEO, Fresno Building Health Communities

Regional Economic Competitiveness Officer
Central Valley Community Foundation

Veronica Garibay-Gonzalez, MPA
Co-Executive Director
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Central California Senior Outreach Manager
Small Business Majority

The Home-Kitchen Pathway

A Data-Driven Review of California's MEHKO Program

Executive Summary

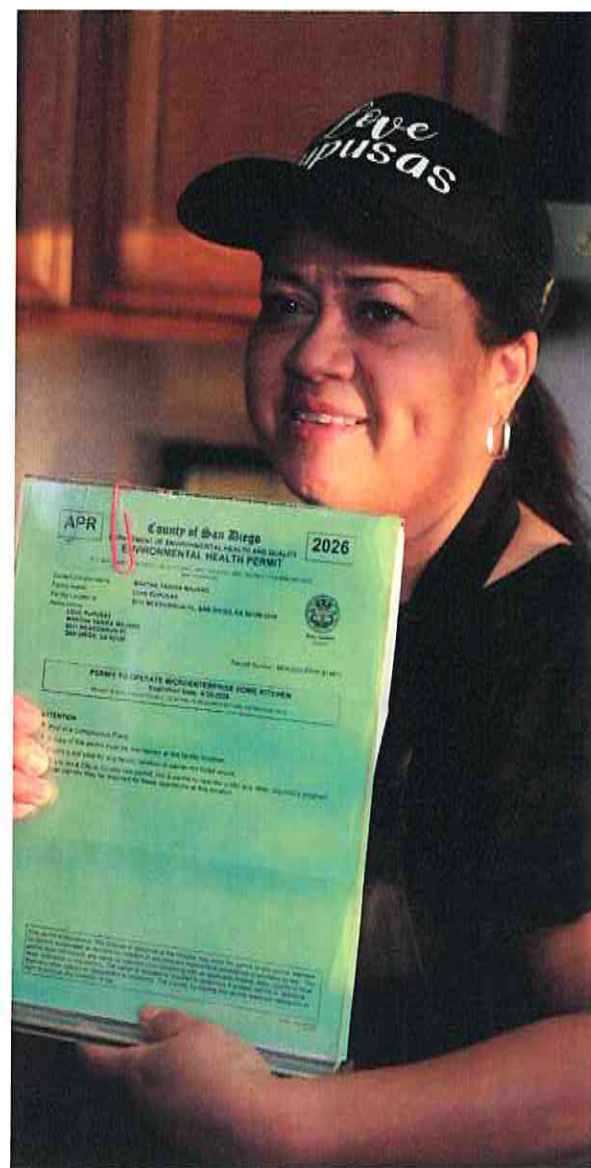
Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy and an essential part of California's diverse culture. Yet starting a food business remains out of reach for many, especially those without access to startup capital or the ability to absorb the risks of opening a traditional food establishment. Launching in the culinary industry can cost more than \$100,000 for a food truck¹ and upwards of \$475,000 for a full-service restaurant.²

Because of these high costs, many Californians opt to begin their food ventures from home. In 2019, the California Legislature created a first-of-its-kind program to legitimize these businesses. The Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) program allows individuals to apply for a permit to sell freshly prepared meals directly to consumers from their licensed and inspected home kitchens. In counties with active programs as of December 2024, MEHKO permit fees average about \$575.

MEHKOs are not statewide by default, so residents only have access if their local jurisdiction adopts the program. Since 2019, 18 areas have opted in, and permits continue to grow each year. By population, more than 60% of Californians now live in an area where MEHKOs are allowed.

This report examines the program's growth and community impacts in its first five years using data from environmental health and code enforcement agencies and surveys of operators and consumers.

Our research finds that MEHKOs are diverse, operate safely, and integrate well into their neighborhoods. Complaints about MEHKOs are uncommon, while problems associated with unpermitted operators occur much more frequently. Operators report positive financial outcomes, income flexibility that supports household and caregiving needs, and skill development through the MEHKO program.



97% of MEHKOs have never received a single complaint of any kind

73% of MEHKOs report that their business provides meaningful financial support for their households*

70% of MEHKO operators are women and 79% are people of color*

*Based on responses from surveyed operators.





Food Safety & Community Impacts

From the program's launch in 2019 through December 2024, 898 MEHKO permits had been issued statewide, and 518 of those permits were active at the end of that period. This analysis is based on complaint data collected through public records requests to environmental health and code enforcement agencies in jurisdictions with active MEHKO programs.

We collected all complaints within these categories that were linked to any address that has ever held a MEHKO permit, including complaints related to noise, traffic, parking, waste disposal, signage, food sales from a residence, or other community impacts. From environmental health agencies, we also requested any complaints, referrals, or emergency or investigatory inspections involving MEHKOs, as well as all complaints related to unpermitted food sales from a residence.

About the Data

This report draws on five sources. We collected statewide permit data from each environmental health agency with an active MEHKO program as of December 2024, and used permit addresses to request complaint records from cities and counties. These public records requests included all complaints involving permitted MEHKOs and unpermitted home-based food vendors.

We also partnered with EMC Research, an independent research firm, who surveyed 230 MEHKO operators, conducted a focus group with 22 operators, and surveyed 1,020 California consumers.

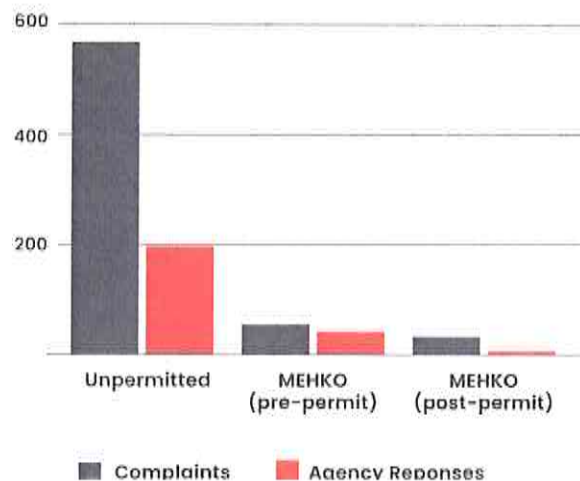
Key Findings

MEHKOs* generated very few complaints.

97% of MEHKOs did not receive a single complaint related to noise, traffic, parking, alcohol service, waste disposal, signage, foodborne illness, or other nuisances.

Most complaints involved unpermitted home-based food vendors*.

Unpermitted home-based food vendors received 606 complaints in the jurisdictions included in this analysis. In contrast, MEHKOs received only 32 complaints during the same period. Of these 606 complaints, 56 were associated with addresses that later obtained a MEHKO permit.



Many complaints had no substantive issue.

More than half of all complaints (52.7%) did not describe any issue beyond the fact that a home-based food business existed. This pattern held for complaints involving MEHKOs as well, where 40.1% contained no substantive concern beyond that someone was cooking and selling food from home.

*By September 2025, the total number of permits issued increased to 1,218.

*Although the phrase "permitted MEHKO" is sometimes used informally, this report uses "MEHKO" to refer only to permitted operations. Home-based food vendors without a MEHKO permit are referred to as unpermitted home-based food vendors.

*For clarity, this term refers only to unpermitted food enterprises operating from a private residence and using the home kitchen. It does not include street or sidewalk vending, which occurs off the home's property and is regulated separately.

Foodborne illness concerns were extremely rare among MEHKOs. From 2019 to 2024, only two foodborne illness complaints were identified among 898 permitted MEHKOs. Both were investigated and could not be definitively traced to the MEHKO, and each was an isolated single-instance report rather than an outbreak.

Most complaints about MEHKOs did not lead to enforcement action. Only nine of the 32 complaints (28.1%) resulted in any action by a local agency. None of the enforcement actions have led to the revocation of a permit.

“We couldn’t find a restaurant space that was affordable. Food trucks were too expensive. MEHKO was perfect.”



MEHKO Operators at a Glance

Diverse entrepreneurs

79% of MEHKO operators are people of color, compared with a national entrepreneur landscape that is majority white.³ Operators represent a range of cultural backgrounds, including Hispanic, Black, Asian, and Middle Eastern.

Women-led businesses

70% of MEHKO operators identify as women, compared with about 45%⁴ of new U.S. entrepreneurs, indicating strong participation by groups underrepresented in traditional food business ownership.

Immigrant representation

46% percent of MEHKOs are run by immigrants, many of whom bring cultural and regional food traditions into their businesses.

Economic motivation

Operators cited low start-up costs, supplemental income (including retirement income) as reasons for starting a MEHKO. More than half reported earning income when other work was unavailable.

Family & community

76% of operators said their MEHKO helps them meet family or caregiving responsibilities while earning income. Many also reported building community connections through their business.

Skills & growth

Operators bring varied experience, and many used the permit to formalize an existing business. 95% gained new skills, and 68% reported plans to expand.

FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

73% said their MEHKO helped them financially

61% said their MEHKO is profitable

57% said their MEHKO provided income when they could not find other work.

53% said that their MEHKO helped them afford their rent or mortgage payments.

32% said their MEHKO helped them grow toward a larger food business

(such as a food truck, commercial catering operation, or brick-and-mortar restaurant)



How MEHKOs Operate

MEHKOs are home-based food businesses permitted by local environmental health agencies. Cooks must be certified in food safety and have their kitchens inspected, similar to restaurants. Meals must be prepared the same day and sold directly to the consumer, and production is limited to what can be safely prepared in a home kitchen.

Service Methods Reported by MEHKO Operators

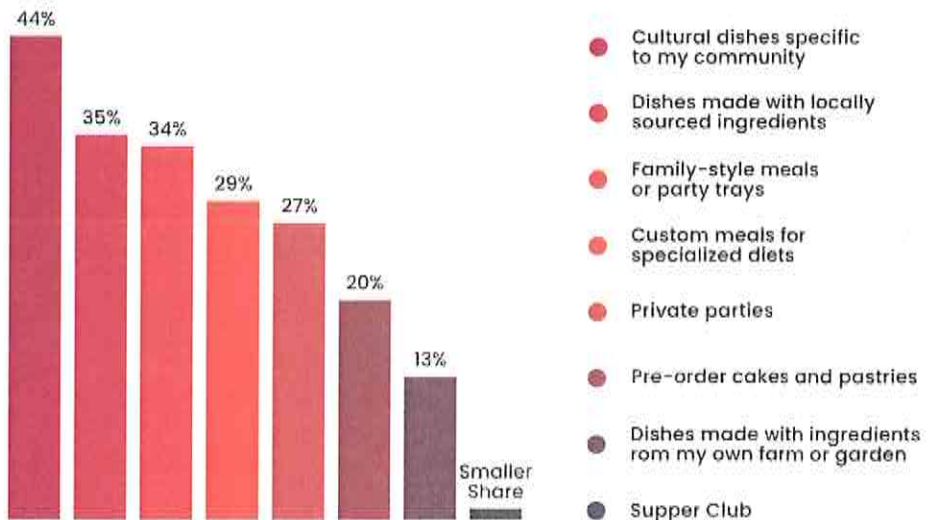
California law allows three main service types for MEHKOs: takeout, delivery, and dine-in. Delivery must be done by the MEHKO itself; the use of third-party delivery services such as DoorDash or UberEats is prohibited under current state law.



(Percentages rounded)

Types of Foods and Services Offered

Surveyed operators reported offering a wide range of foods and services.



Frequency of Operation

Operators reported varied schedules, most commonly cooking one to three times per week.



“I’ve been able to make some money without having a huge financial initial lay out. I have also been able to cook on my own schedule, and to set my own “open” days.

Where MEHKOs Operate

MEHKOs can be found in many different parts of California. Using National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) community types, permit data shows MEHKOs in large suburbs, big cities, midsize and small cities, towns, and rural areas.⁵ This means the program is being used in both busy urban areas and quieter, more rural communities.

Permit numbers reflect this variety. MEHKO permits were most commonly issued in suburban neighborhoods (44.7%) but were also common in urban communities (40.7%) and in rural areas or towns (14.5%). We maintain a map of active permits at www.cookconnect.com/map.

“

We live in a rural area and we're in need of a restaurant. Local zoning did not allow a typical restaurant so the MEHKO was perfect.



MEHKOs must operate out of the operator's primary residence. Survey data shows that 58% owned their home, 31% rented, and 5% lived with family.⁶

Because the program relies on local adoption, availability still varies across the state. By population, about 60 percent of Californians live in areas where MEHKOs are allowed.

Jurisdictions With MEHKO Programs

(at the time of publication)



Alameda, Amador, Contra Costa, Imperial, Lake, Los Angeles, Monterey, Riverside, San Benito, San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sierra, Solano, Sonoma. The City of Berkeley also operates its own MEHKO program. Four cities in California have their own environmental health departments and may adopt MEHKOs separately from their counties.

Note: Los Angeles County, Santa Cruz County, and Sonoma County were not included in the permit analysis because data was not yet available. We did not receive data from Lake County except for the number of issued permits.

“

I need a job to live in this area, and it was an easy accessible way to start my own thing. And commercial kitchens, all of those things are really not viable. [MEHKO] gave me power and freedom.



Understanding MEHKO Operator Needs

MEHKO operators are clear about what they need most: support to grow their businesses. Many rely on personal networks to find customers, and most say marketing, branding, and customer outreach are their biggest hurdles. With 68% reporting no previous experience running a food business, many operators are navigating these challenges for the first time.

Research found that the program's inspection and training requirements were not major obstacles. 95% said the home inspection was easier than expected, and only 7% described the Food Safety Manager Certification as a significant challenge.

Across surveys and focus groups, operators consistently identified the supports that would make the greatest difference: grants, marketing assistance, technology tools for sales, mentorship, and opportunities to connect with other MEHKOs. Taken together, the findings indicate clear opportunities to strengthen support for MEHKO operators.

What Consumers Say About MEHKOs

Awareness is low

71% of Californians had no prior awareness of the MEHKO program.

Attitudes are positive

80% agreed that MEHKOs are a good way to try new foods, and 74% said they are good for communities.

Broad interest in homemade food

Consumer survey findings show that interest in MEHKOs is closely tied to perceptions of authenticity and a desire for home-cooked taste and quality.

Support for legalization is strong

90% said they would support their county implementing a system for legal, permitted MEHKOs.



“MEHKOs are still new to many people, and for some potential customers, ordering from a home kitchen can feel unfamiliar or even intimidating, which makes attracting new customers challenging.”



“

I started a MEHKO business to share the traditional food I grew up with and keep my culture alive in my new community. Cooking from home allows me to connect with people through food, support my family, and build a small business doing what I love.

Endnotes

1. SBDCNet National Information Clearinghouse (2023). "Food Truck Business". <https://www.sbdnet.org/small-business-research-reports/restaurant-business-full-service/>
2. SBDCNet National Information Clearinghouse (2024). "Full Service Restaurant Business." <https://www.sbdnet.org/small-business-research-reports/restaurant-business-full-service/>
3. Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (2022). "Who is the Entrepreneur? New Entrepreneurs in the United States, 1996–2021." https://www.kauffman.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Kauffman_Trends-in-Entrepreneurship-Who-Is-The-Entrepreneur-2021.pdf
4. Association for Enterprise Opportunity (2025). "Women Business Ownership Fact Sheet." <https://epop.norc.org/content/dam/epop/media/in-the-news/pdf/2025-women-business-ownership-fact-sheet.pdf>
5. Addresses were geocoded and classified using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale framework, which categorizes locations as City, Suburb, Town, or Rural based on population density and proximity to metropolitan areas. Most addresses were geocoded using the U.S. Census Bureau API, and OpenStreetMap and ArcGIS Services were used sequentially to geocode addresses that were not available from the Census Bureau. Percentages reflect percent of valid addresses in each category. Six MEHKO addresses for Lake County were not geocoded because we did not receive address data for those permits.
6. Some respondents did not provide a response to this question.

Acknowledgments

This report was developed through a collaboration between COOK Alliance, CAMEO Network, EMC Research, and Will von Geldern, University of Washington. The work was made possible by support from the California Workforce Development Board.

About the Organizations

COOK Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to legitimizing and uplifting home-based food businesses through training, resources, and policy work.

CAMEO Network strengthens micro-businesses through a 400+ member network of organizations that provide financing, training, and essential support.

EMC Research is a national full-service opinion research firm, serving an extensive and diverse range of public and private sector clients since 1989.

Will von Geldern, University of Washington is an academic researcher with expertise in policy analysis and public health. Will provided methodological guidance and collected and analyzed data for this report.

The California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) is the Governor's agent for the development, oversight, and continuous improvement of California's workforce development system.

Contact

hello@cookalliance.org
cookalliance.org

The full version of this report, including detailed findings and methodology, is available at

www.cookalliance.org/researchreport



THE FUTURE OF THE CENTER

At Clovis Culinary Center, it's all about capacity and community. With aspirations for a larger facility, expanded class offerings, and dedicated support for food trucks and co-packing, we're building a space designed to meet the growing demand for culinary entrepreneurship in the region.

WHEN CENTRAL CALIFORNIA'S CULINARY SCENE THRIVES...

...Everyone wins. New businesses emerge, local ingredients shine, and communities grow stronger through shared food, culture, and opportunity. Clovis Culinary Center helps make that possible – one entrepreneur at a time.

HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Community leaders and business owners play a vital role in shaping a resilient local economy, and partnering with Clovis Culinary Center is a direct investment in that future. Your support helps remove barriers for aspiring food entrepreneurs, expand access to training and compliant kitchen space, and strengthen pathways to small business ownership. By partnering with the Center, you're not only fostering job creation and economic mobility, but also preserving local talent, encouraging innovation, and reinforcing Central Valley as a place where entrepreneurship can thrive.

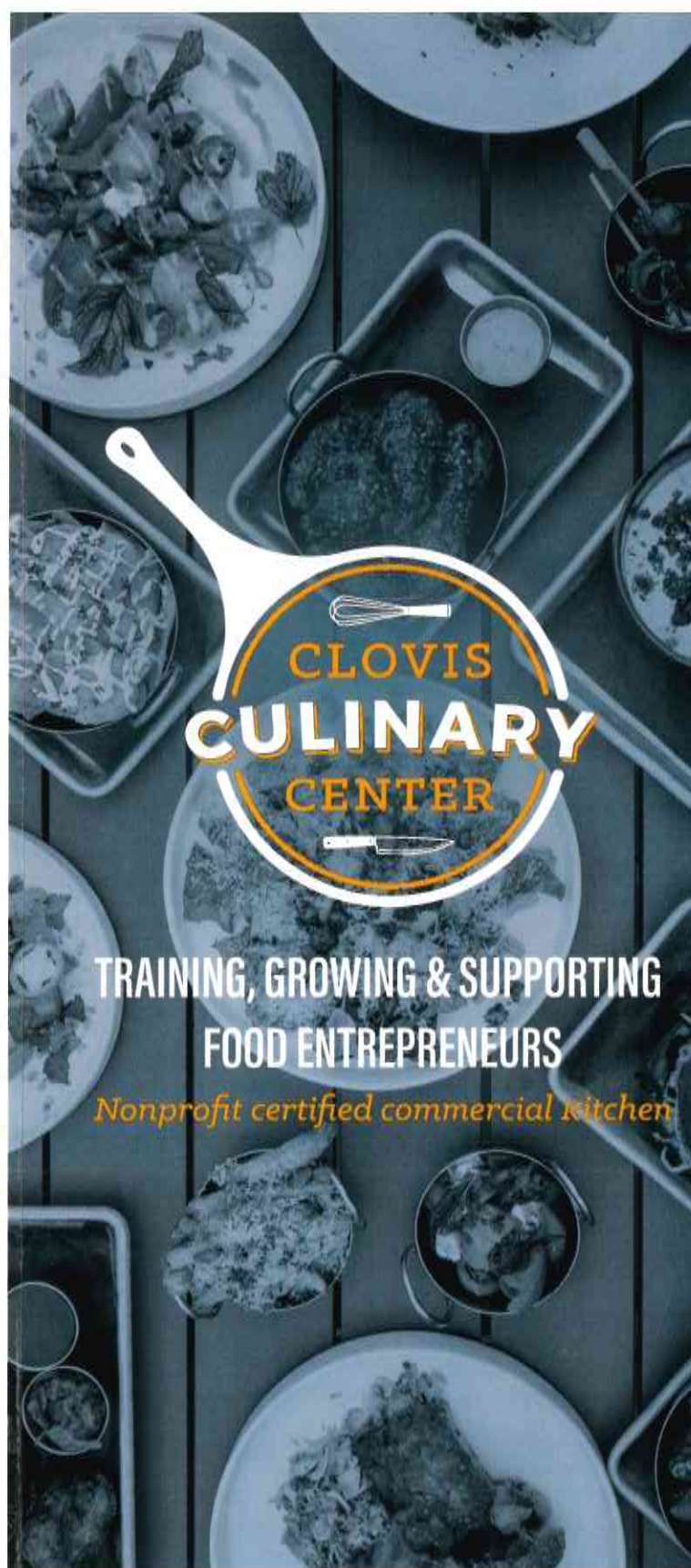
Every new food business builds economic resilience, creates unique local jobs, and fosters a distinct, desirable sense of place.

Your support creates measurable community impact - transforming ideas into businesses, businesses into employers, and passion into long-term economic growth.

GET IN TOUCH:

krismarshall@clovisculinarycenter.com

3185 Willow Ave, Clovis, CA 93612 • (559) 765-1016



CLOVIS CULINARY CENTER IS A NONPROFIT BUSINESS INCUBATOR DESIGNED TO SUPPORT FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

Our certified commercial kitchen offers twenty-four-hour, seven-day-a-week access to wide-range of professional equipment that help prepare specialized products from start to finish.

Clovis Culinary Center provides access to industry experts. From business planning and marketing to food safety, permitting, and licensing, we help turn recipes into real sustainable businesses.

CHANGING LIVES

Every business launched represents more than a new product; it's a family empowered, a dream unlocked, and a pathway to economic independence - where ideas become livelihoods and talent becomes opportunity.

THE MISSION:

Provide kitchen space and create a business incubator to help assist and facilitate commercial culinary success.

200 : 1,500 : 135

BUSINESSES
LAUNCHED

JOBS
CREATED

ACTIVE
MEMBERS

FEEDING INTO THE ECONOMY

Our impact extends far beyond the kitchen. Each business we support adds value to the marketplace, creates opportunity for local workers, and keeps dollars circulating where they matter most—right here at home.

DADS COOKIES: A CCC SUCCESS STORY



Dads Cookies began with a family recipe that quickly outgrew a home kitchen.

At Clovis Culinary Center, they found the space, equipment, and guidance to turn that dream into a thriving business.

With support in permits, production, and business planning, they scaled their operation and built a beloved brand which includes a food truck and several physical locations.

They're one of many entrepreneurs that turned a recipe into reality at the Center.



WE WOULDN'T BE WHERE WE ARE WITHOUT THE CLOVIS CULINARY CENTER. THEY HELPED US TURN OUR IDEA INTO AN OPERATION AND GAVE US THE CLARITY TO GROW IN THE RIGHT WAY.

LANCE SANCHEZ, OWNER @ DADS COOKIES

COOKING UP CULTURE

Inside our walls, culture is shared one recipe at a time. We support makers who preserve heritage, celebrate diversity, and introduce new flavors that shape the region's evolving food landscape.

From: Jennifer McDonald <jmcdonald@ij.org>
Sent: Wednesday, July 1, 2026 9:35 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: Public Comment: 6-30-26 Agenda Item 14 Proposed Amendment to the Ordinance Code of Fresno County, Adding Chapter 8.51 "Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations"
Attachments: Fresno County MEHKO Comment.pdf
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Good morning,

Please see the attached written comments from the Institute for Justice on Agenda Item 14: Proposed Amendment to the Ordinance Code of Fresno County, Adding Chapter 8.51 "Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations." I realize the meeting was yesterday and apologize for our tardiness. Could you please forward our comments to the board and enter them into the official record?

Thank you,

Jennifer McDonald
Director of Activism
Institute for Justice
www.ij.org
(703) 682-9349

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INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

June 30, 2026

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
2281 Tulare St.
Fresno, CA 93721

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 14: Proposed Amendment to the Ordinance Code of Fresno County, Adding Chapter 8.51 “Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations”

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Bredefeld and Supervisors,

The Institute for Justice (IJ) is a national nonprofit organization and the leading advocate for homemade food producers nationwide. IJ strongly urges the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to vote in favor of today’s agenda item 14 and support the adoption of a Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKO) program in Fresno County.

The MEHKO program is one of the first of its kind in the nation, making California an innovative example for other states. MEHKOs are a great first step for home chefs with big dreams but little capital who aspire to one day open a brick-and-mortar business by empowering them to start small and grow later. The high cost of opening a brick-and-mortar restaurant often keeps aspiring entrepreneurs out of the food industry. The MEHKO program can be life-changing for those aspiring entrepreneurs, especially women, mothers, and those from low-income communities, by providing an opportunity for them to start a small business.¹ By allowing these micro businesses to operate from a private residence, cooks can try out their recipes, test their business models, and build up savings before investing tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in a commercial kitchen or restaurant space.

Furthermore, the foods that these businesses produce are incredibly safe. In 2023, IJ submitted public record requests to all the jurisdictions in California that have opted into the MEHKO program and found zero confirmed cases of foodborne illness resulting from food produced in a MEHKO.² This finding was further substantiated the following year when the COOK Alliance and the University of Washington found that during the first five years of the program, 97% of MEHKOs had never received any kind of complaint—including for food safety, as well as for traffic, noise, or other nuisance behaviors that many assume may be associated with running a

¹ McDonald, J. (2019). The relationship between cottage food laws and business outcomes: A quantitative study of cottage food producers in the United States. *Food Policy*, 84, 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2019.01.012>.

² Smith Ewing, E. & McDonald, J. (September 2023). *New data show homemade food for sale is incredibly safe*. Arlington, VA: Institute for Justice. <https://ij.org/report/new-data-show-homemade-food-for-sale-is-incredibly-safe/>.

home-based business.³ The data are clear: MEHKOs are safe and do not impose negative externalities on their neighbors.

Despite these benefits, Fresno County has yet to join the other California counties that have chosen to opt into the MEHKO program. Current state law permits MEHKOs to sell up to 30 meals per day, 90 meals per week, and \$100,000 in gross annual revenue. Fresno County residents are missing out on an important economic opportunity, as well as the opportunity to purchase fresh, homemade food from their neighbors. The MEHKO program has been very successful in the counties that have already opted into the program, including San Diego, Los Angeles, and Riverside. In these jurisdictions, MEHKOs have provided tremendous benefits to hundreds of participating home chefs and their customers alike. This program would be equally beneficial if adopted in Fresno County.

Finally, it is worth noting that the right to earn an honest living is fundamental to the freedoms we enjoy in this country. Indeed, it is only in recent decades that Americans have had to seek government permission for the ability to use their private property for their entrepreneurial endeavors. For most people, their home is the most valuable asset they will ever own. It is now more important than ever that we return to America's founding principles and embrace the ability to determine one's own economic destiny using the property that so many have worked so very hard to own.

It's time for Fresno County to join California's innovative home kitchen program. We strongly urge the Board of Supervisors to increase access to entrepreneurship, self-sufficiency, and economic growth by adopting the MEHKO Program in Fresno County. I would be happy to have further conversations with the Board about the program following today's hearing.

Thank you,

/s/ Jennifer McDonald

Jennifer McDonald
Director of Activism
Institute for Justice
jmcdonald@ij.org

³ COOK Alliance. (2026). *The Home Kitchen Pathway: A Data-Driven Review of California's MEHKO Program*. <https://www.cookalliance.org/s/Full-Report-CA-MEHKO-Program-Review.pdf>.

From: Tim Lambert <timlambert@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Friday, July 3, 2026 10:22 AM
To: Clerk/BOS; District 3; District 1; District 2; District 4; District 5
Subject: Fresno County Supervisor Board Meeting Agenda Item #14 Tuesday July 1, 2026

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July 3, 2026

**The Honorable Board of Fresno County Supervisors Districts 1-5,
Clerk of Fresno County Board of Supervisors**



Dear Chairman & Supervisors,

It was a pleasure seeing you at yesterday's Fresno County Board of Supervisors meeting. I was seated in the front row across from the Board wearing the black and white checkered sport coat. I attended specifically to listen to Agenda Item #14 regarding the proposed implementation of California's Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKO) program.

I wanted to thank you for the thoughtful questions you raised during the discussion. While much of the conversation understandably focused on expanding opportunities for aspiring food entrepreneurs, I appreciated your willingness to ask questions about how the program would function in practice and how Fresno County can ensure its successful implementation.

I would like to begin by saying that I support expanding access to entrepreneurship. Lowering barriers for individuals seeking to enter the food industry is an admirable goal. Every successful restaurant, catering company, bakery, or food manufacturer started somewhere. Programs such as MEHKO can provide an important entry point for individuals who may not yet have the financial resources to operate from a commercial kitchen.

My concerns are not with the concept of MEHKO itself, but with ensuring that Fresno County implements the program in a manner that protects public health while helping entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses.

During the presentation by the Department of Public Health, I was hoping to hear more measurable information regarding the experiences of counties that have already implemented MEHKO. Specifically, I would have appreciated data addressing topics such as:

- Food safety compliance rates
- Consumer complaints and complaint resolution
- Foodborne illness investigations
- Inspection findings and corrective actions
- Staffing impacts on local health departments
- Business retention and long-term growth

- The percentage of MEHKO businesses that successfully transition into commercial food facilities

These types of performance metrics can help the Board evaluate not only whether the program is functioning, but whether it is achieving its intended goals while maintaining public confidence in our local food system.

Based on my experience working with food entrepreneurs throughout the Central Valley, I respectfully offer several areas that deserve careful consideration during implementation.

Food Safety

Residential kitchens are designed to prepare meals for a household, not to support continuous commercial food production. Although MEHKO places limits on production volume, preparing dozens of meals each week introduces challenges that many home kitchens were never designed to accommodate.

Some questions I believe deserve consideration include:

- Is there sufficient refrigerated and frozen storage to safely separate household food from commercial inventory?
- Are operators consistently following safe food handling practices to prevent cross-contamination?
- Do operators fully understand the difference between cleaning and sanitizing food-contact surfaces?
- Are residential utensils and equipment capable of withstanding repeated commercial use while maintaining sanitation standards?

These questions are not intended to discourage participation but to ensure that public health remains the highest priority.

Oversight and Compliance

The annual inspection process is an important safeguard, but it may not fully reflect day-to-day operating practices.

Additional considerations include:

- How will Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) be developed and verified?
- How will ongoing compliance be measured throughout the year?
- Does the Department of Public Health have sufficient staffing to inspect and support an expanding number of MEHKO operators?
- How will consumer complaints be investigated and resolved?

Strong oversight not only protects consumers but also protects responsible MEHKO operators who are committed to following the rules.

Business Growth and Long-Term Success

One of the most compelling arguments presented in favor of MEHKO is that it serves as a pathway for entrepreneurs to eventually establish larger food businesses.

I believe this objective deserves ongoing evaluation. Based on the research I have conducted, relatively few MEHKO businesses appear to transition into larger commercial operations. Understanding why some businesses successfully scale while others do not would help improve the program over time.

Fresno County already has an impressive network of organizations dedicated to helping entrepreneurs succeed, including:

- Valley Community Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Women's Entrepreneur Center at Fresno State
- Center for Community Transformation at Fresno Pacific University
- Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation
- Clovis Culinary Center
- Numerous nonprofit and community-based business support organizations

These resources provide education, technical assistance, mentoring, financing guidance, and access to commercial kitchen facilities that can complement the MEHKO program and help businesses continue growing beyond the home kitchen model.

Through my organization, **The Culinary Network**, we work with nonprofit organizations and community partners to educate aspiring food entrepreneurs throughout California. Our focus includes food safety, regulatory compliance, business planning, financial management, operational systems, and sustainable business growth. We believe entrepreneurship succeeds best when opportunity is paired with education, accountability, and access to resources.

In addition, we are actively working with churches, community organizations, and local businesses to help expand the availability of certified commissary kitchens throughout Fresno County. We are also developing a long-term vision for a larger regional commissary kitchen and small-batch food manufacturing center that would support entrepreneurs producing sauces, seasonings, baked goods, value-added agricultural products, and other specialty foods. Our hope is to create a true pathway that allows entrepreneurs to progress from home production into commercial manufacturing as their businesses grow.

As Fresno County moves forward with MEHKO, I respectfully encourage consideration of several implementation practices that could strengthen the program:

- Annual continuing food safety education for all permit holders.
- Standardized SOP templates for common food operations.
- Enhanced guidance on ingredient sourcing, storage, and traceability.
- Ongoing collaboration with local business development organizations and commercial kitchen operators.
- Periodic reporting to the Board regarding permits issued, inspection outcomes, complaints received, enforcement actions, and business growth.

I believe Fresno County has an opportunity to become a statewide model for implementing MEHKO responsibly—one that successfully balances entrepreneurship with public health and consumer confidence.

Thank you again for your thoughtful leadership during yesterday's discussion and for your willingness to ask important questions on behalf of Fresno County residents. I would welcome the opportunity to meet

with you to discuss these ideas further and explore ways our organization can support the County's efforts to educate entrepreneurs and strengthen the long-term success of this program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Tim Lambert
Co-Founder
The Culinary Network

M: 559.288.9396 E: timlambert@sbcglobal.net



The Culinary Network (TCN)

Item 44
7/14/2026 BOS
Meeting

From: Alma Antuna <aaeverquest@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 9:50 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: Comment Letter _ Letter of Support for the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) Pilot Program
Attachments: MEHKO Letter of Support Fresno County.docx

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Good morning, my name is Alma Antuna, and I respectfully submit the attached letter of support for the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) Pilot Program, which is scheduled to be heard by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors on July 16, 2026. I respectfully request that this letter be included in the agenda packet for the Board's consideration.

Thank you,
Alma Antuna

July 2, 2026

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Chairman Gary Bredefeld
Vice Chairman Luis Chavez
Supervisor Brian Pacheco
Supervisor Buddy Mendes
Supervisor Nathan Magsig
Fresno County Hall of Records
2281 Tulare Street
Fresno, CA 93721-2198

Subject: Support the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) Pilot Program

Dear Chair Bredefeld, Vice Chair Chavez, and Honorable Supervisors,

I am writing in strong support of Fresno County's Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) Pilot Program. This program provides a practical and affordable pathway for aspiring entrepreneurs like me to legally launch a food businesses from home while operating under appropriate public health oversight.

For many Fresno County (County) residents like me the greatest barrier to entrepreneurship is not a lack of talent, work ethic, or demand for the products we offer, it is access to capital. Traditional restaurants often require tens of thousands of dollars in startup costs for commercial leases, tenant improvements, equipment purchases, permits, insurance, and payroll expenses before serving a single customer. The MEHKO program offers an alternative pathway by significantly reducing upfront costs and allowing entrepreneurs like me to leverage an existing home kitchen to test and grow a business.

The pilot program is particularly important because it creates opportunities for County residents who may otherwise not be in a financial position to start a business. First-time entrepreneurs like me can transform their culinary skills into legitimate business ventures without assuming substantial debt.

The County's small-business economy demonstrates why this opportunity is so important. According to the most recent available data from the U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy, U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 74,598 small businesses operate within the County, representing nearly 99.95% of all businesses in the county. Additionally, approximately 96.2%

of county businesses have fewer than twenty (20) employees or are owner-operated (no employees) enterprises. These figures demonstrate that small business ownership is the backbone of our local economy.

Self-employment and non-employer businesses increased by approximately 18.6% between 2014 and 2022, reflecting a growing interest among residents residing within the County to pursuing independent business ownership and supplemental income opportunities.

The MEHKO pilot program supports this entrepreneurial trend by providing a scalable pathway to business ownership. Rather than requiring potential entrepreneurs like me to immediately invest in a food truck or brick-and-mortar restaurant, the program allows qualifying County residents to start small, validate customer demand, refine operations, and develop a loyal customer base. Successful entrepreneurs can then transition into larger ventures such as catering businesses, food trucks, commercial kitchens, and eventually permanent restaurants.

Research consistently shows that businesses launched with lower levels of debt and overhead are often better positioned for long-term sustainability. Programs that lower startup barriers and reduce financial risk can help improve the likelihood of success for new entrepreneurs. The success of local entrepreneurship is a benefit that enriches our community.

The Fresno County MEHKO Pilot Program will also encourage legal compliance by providing residents with a legitimate, regulated avenue to sell food. Instead of forcing aspiring entrepreneurs into the informal economy or preventing them from pursuing their goals altogether, the program creates a safe, inspected, and accountable framework for small-scale food businesses.

Beyond economic benefits, the program supports cultural entrepreneurship. The County's diverse communities possess rich culinary traditions that can be shared with residents through home-based businesses. These enterprises preserve cultural heritage while creating opportunities for income generation and wealth building.

Importantly, the County's proposed pilot program will allow home-based food entrepreneurs to gain real-world experience before making larger financial commitments. This approach creates a business incubator model that encourages responsible growth and economic mobility.

For these reasons, I strongly support the implementation of the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation Pilot Program. The program expands economic opportunities, promotes entrepreneurship, lowers barriers to business ownership, and creates a scalable pathway for residents to build successful enterprises from the ground up.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to supporting small business development and economic opportunity throughout Fresno County.

Respectfully submitted,

Alma Antuna
Fresno County Resident

From: District 5
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2026 10:13 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: FW: Micro-kitchens

From: susan williams <srwillia@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2026 9:05 AM
To: District 5 <District5@fresnocountyca.gov>
Subject: Micro-kitchens

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Good morning Supervisor Magsig,

We wanted to voice our extreme displeasure with the proposed ordinance which would allow MEHKO's in residential neighborhoods.

Restaurants belong in commercial areas-and for good reason. They are required by law to address traffic, parking and noise issues. They are required by law to implement grease traps, commercial vents and fire suppression systems. They are separated by block walls from neighboring homes and located on arterials. MEHKO's are exempt from all of these.

County resources are already stretched thin-despite the recent hiring of additional code enforcement and health officers, we are still understaffed.

There will be problems with traffic, parking, noise and odors, but code enforcement will not be able to resolve them because there are no restrictions on any of these. (The noise from patio dining will not pass the muster required for a citation).

Health officers will have an additional 66 case loads to handle under the two year trial period. They are doing their best, but cannot even keep up with their current caseload.

Residents are bombarded daily with new mandates from the state which chip away at the stability of neighborhoods. At this point (Arambula is looking to make them allowed by-right) the county has the authority to opt out.

My husband and I would encourage thoughtful deliberation about what this will do to neighborhoods-and ask that you reject the proposed ordinance.

Sue and Kurt Williams

From: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2026 10:21 PM
To: Prado, Joe; District 1; Avila, Lucio; District 2; District 3; District 4; District 5; Clerk/BOS; clerk@fresno.gov; Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno
Subject: Re: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

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Good morning, Mr. Prado:

Thank you for your response and for addressing the questions raised in our July 4 email. We appreciate that the County has provided additional information regarding enforcement, staffing, funding, complaint handling, and the MEHKO pilot program.

However, after reviewing your response, we continue to have serious concerns that we believe must be addressed before the ordinance moves forward for final approval.

First, with all due respect, you have not attended a meeting with our Alliance to hear directly about the reality currently facing licensed businesses, restaurants, food trucks, caterers, and food vendors that operate with permits. These concerns are not theoretical, nor do they exist only on paper. They are real problems occurring every day: unpermitted food sales, outdoor cooking operations at private residences, residential food businesses, unfair competition, allergen risks, inconsistent enforcement, and frustration among businesses that have paid for permits, inspections, insurance, taxes, equipment, commissary services, and every other legal requirement.

A written response is appreciated, but it does not replace listening directly to the businesses that will bear the consequences of this decision. Before approving the ordinance, we respectfully request that you and the appropriate County representatives meet with our Alliance to hear firsthand what is happening in the community.

We would also like to address the issue of penalties. We understand that the proposed ordinance includes penalties and fees for those who fail to comply. However, penalties only work when there is a real capacity to enforce them. The primary issue is not whether penalties exist on paper. The real issue is whether Environmental Health, Code Enforcement, the cities, and the County have the staffing, training, time, and coordination necessary to enforce them consistently.

Laws, codes, and permit requirements already exist to control unpermitted food operations. Nevertheless, many of the current problems affecting licensed businesses remain unresolved. Our Alliance has already reported unpermitted food operations, food sales from private homes, outdoor cooking operations, zoning problems, allergen risks, and other irregularities to the Health Department and Code Enforcement. Several additional violations have also been reported verbally. However, many of these operations continue.

For that reason, we believe it would be more responsible to resolve the existing problems that are already affecting us before opening a new program that may create additional responsibilities for the same agencies that have not yet been able to fully control the existing problem.

Your response states that Environmental Health will be the primary agency responsible for enforcing the MEHKO program and that public nuisance complaints will be handled by city and County Code Enforcement offices. Respectfully, this confirms that the program does not involve Environmental Health alone. It also involves Code Enforcement, zoning, public nuisances, neighborhoods, parking, traffic, garbage, outdoor cooking, signage, potentially unauthorized sales, and consumer safety.

For this reason, we believe the agencies that will actually be responsible for these areas must also provide answers, not only Environmental Health. The city, the County, Code Enforcement, and zoning and planning departments must clearly explain how they will address residential operations, unpermitted sales, public nuisances, the use of private property, neighborhood complaints, and businesses operating outside the rules.

We are also concerned that the County is relying on staff who have not yet been fully recruited, hired, trained, or tested within an active MEHKO program. Your response states that five additional Environmental Health Specialist positions were allocated and that recruitment will take place during this fiscal year. However, those positions have not yet been fully recruited, filled, trained, or evaluated under an actual MEHKO enforcement system.

If the County has not been able to fully resolve the current informal operations that have already been reported to Environmental Health and Code Enforcement, how can it assure the public that it will be able to effectively control a new program?

The data from the statewide MEHKO study further increases our concern. The study reviewed the experience of other counties and reported 898 MEHKO permits issued, 32 complaints against permitted MEHKO operations, and 606 complaints against unpermitted home-based food vendors. This demonstrates that the largest problem was not limited to permitted MEHKO operators, but involved home-based food operations operating without permits.

That is exactly our concern in Fresno County. A pilot program limited to 66 permits will not automatically resolve the informal food market. On the contrary, without a strong, clear, and consistent enforcement plan, the program may create greater confusion, more unpermitted food sales, and more unfair competition against licensed businesses.

The same study also indicates that, of the 638 total complaints reviewed, approximately 85% were submitted to Environmental Health and 71% of the complaints did not result in an enforcement action. These numbers are important because they demonstrate that the community generally contacts Environmental Health, even though many complaints also involve zoning, public nuisances, traffic, parking, garbage, use of private property, or sales conducted outside regulatory requirements.

Therefore, we ask: If most complaints are ultimately directed to Environmental Health, but many of the underlying problems actually require the involvement of Code Enforcement, zoning, the cities, and the County, what is the written coordination protocol among all these agencies?

We also remain concerned about allergens and consumer safety. We have already raised concerns regarding sauces, undeclared ingredients, and allergens such as peanuts. These issues may place members of the public at serious risk. If these matters are already difficult to monitor in licensed businesses, they will be even more difficult to control when food is sold from private homes, through social media, from garages, patios, or informal kitchens.

Regarding funding, your response states that enforcement will be funded through permit fees and applicable penalties. Respectfully, we need an actual financial explanation. How does the economic analysis support the conclusion that 66 permits can help finance inspections, complaint investigations, reinspections, staffing, training, coordination with Code Enforcement, legal notices, penalties, and follow-up enforcement?

We also ask directly: How can a program consisting of only 66 permits be expected to support the cost of five additional positions and all the responsibilities this program will create?

We request that the County provide a clear financial breakdown, including projected permit revenue, projected penalty revenue, personnel costs, training costs, inspection costs, complaint investigation costs, reinspection costs, and the costs of coordinating with Code Enforcement.

We also request that the County be honest and specific about how it will protect existing licensed businesses. A general statement regarding the mission of Environmental Health does not answer the central question. Licensed businesses already pay for permits, inspections, insurance, taxes, equipment, refrigeration, commissary services, waste disposal, fire safety, business licenses, and ongoing compliance.

We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for fairness and a level playing field. We ask that the County enforce the rules that already exist before creating another program that may increase the burden on inspectors, Code Enforcement, cities, neighborhoods, and businesses that comply with the law.

We also want to emphasize that the economic consequences for licensed businesses are already being seen in Fresno. We are not speaking only about a possible future concern. In recent years, we have seen restaurants, small businesses, and food trucks close or reduce their operations because they could no longer sustain the costs of operations, permits, inspections, insurance, rent, equipment, commissary services, taxes, payroll, and unequal competition.

The closure of businesses such as Cardenas Restaurant, along with other small restaurants and food trucks that have closed or reduced their operations, reflects a reality that cannot be ignored. Licensed businesses are bearing all the costs of legal compliance while many informal operations continue selling food without the same obligations.

The central question is: Why is the County attempting to authorize another new program when it has not yet resolved the current problems already affecting established businesses?

We are also concerned about the staffing rationale. If the County is stating that a pilot program consisting of only 66 MEHKO permits will require five additional positions, in addition to the existing personnel assigned to the Consumer Protection Unit, then these numbers deserve a clearer explanation.

Environmental Health currently oversees approximately 1,800 restaurants and approximately 550 mobile food permits or mobile food businesses. This represents approximately 2,350 existing food operations requiring oversight, inspections, follow-up, complaint handling, and enforcement.

If the County considers it necessary to increase staffing for 66 new MEHKO permits, how can it justify the conclusion that the current system has sufficient capacity to supervise thousands of existing businesses while also adding a new program?

Using a simple comparison, eight staff members for 66 permits would represent a staffing ratio of approximately 12%. If that same ratio were applied to the approximately 2,350 food operations already under supervision, hundreds of employees would be required. We understand that not every program requires the exact same staffing ratio, but this comparison demonstrates that the County must clearly explain how it calculated its actual enforcement capacity.

The numbers do not add up if the County recognizes the need for additional staff to oversee 66 new permits while, at the same time, it has not been able to effectively resolve the current problems involving informal operations, pending complaints, unpermitted vendors, outdoor cooking operations, allergen risks, and the lack of coordination with Code Enforcement.

Before authorizing another program, the County should demonstrate that it can enforce the rules that already exist. Otherwise, the result may be greater disorder, more complaints, increased pressure on inspectors, and additional economic harm to licensed businesses that comply with the law.

For all these reasons, we respectfully ask the Board of Supervisors to take a moment to carefully consider these issues before approving this ordinance. Fresno County and the City of Fresno already have many unresolved problems involving unpermitted food sales, outdoor cooking operations, zoning violations, informal vendors, garbage, public nuisances, and unfair competition against licensed businesses.

If MEHKO applications will not begin until January 2027, there is no urgent reason to approve this ordinance immediately without a complete implementation plan. The County has time to pause, listen, correct the deficiencies, and create a more responsible system.

We therefore respectfully request that the final vote be postponed and that the County use this time to establish a formal advisory committee before approving the ordinance.

This committee should include representatives of licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, mobile food vendors, MEHKO representatives, Environmental Health, City Code Enforcement, County Code Enforcement, planning and zoning representatives, public health representatives, consumers, and small businesses.

Our position is not opposition to opportunities for small businesses. Our position is that any new food program must be realistic, enforceable, transparent, financially viable, and fair to licensed businesses that have already invested substantially to comply with the law.

We respectfully request written responses to the following questions:

1. What is the written enforcement protocol among Environmental Health, City Code Enforcement, County Code Enforcement, planning, and zoning?
2. What will the response times be for complaints, including complaints made at night and on weekends?
3. How will the County enforce the law against home-based food operators who do not apply for a MEHKO permit?
4. How will allergen risks and undeclared ingredients be controlled?
5. What is the actual projected cost of enforcing the pilot program?
6. How much revenue is expected from only 66 permits?
7. How can 66 permits help finance five additional positions and all related enforcement responsibilities?
8. What specific protections will be provided to existing licensed businesses?
9. Will the County publish quarterly reports showing permits issued, complaints received, inspections conducted, violations found, reinspections performed, penalties imposed, suspensions, revocations, and foodborne illness investigations?
10. Why must the ordinance be approved now if applications will not begin until January 2027?
11. Why not first resolve the current problems involving informal food sales and unpermitted operations before opening a new program?
12. When will the County meet directly with our Alliance to hear from the licensed businesses that will be affected?
13. If the County believes additional staffing is necessary for a pilot program consisting of only 66 MEHKO permits, how does it justify its position that it currently has sufficient capacity to supervise approximately 1,800 restaurants, 550 mobile food permits, and the informal operations that have already been reported?

Thank you for your time and attention to these concerns. We respectfully request that the County pause final approval until it presents the public with a complete, transparent, funded, coordinated, and genuinely enforceable plan. Before opening another regulatory pathway, the County must demonstrate that it can control the current problems already affecting licensed businesses, consumers, and the community.

Sincerely,

Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno

On Thu, Jul 9, 2026 at 8:28 AM Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov> wrote:

Good Morning,

Pulling responses together that address your questions from the July 4th email.

- Who will enforce it.

The Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division will be the primary enforcement agency for the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation program (MEHKO.) Public nuisance complaints will be handled by local city and county code enforcement offices.

- How enforcement will be funded.

Enforcement will be funded by permit fees and any applicable penalty fees issued due to noncompliance.

- Whether sufficient personnel exist.

Environmental Health (EH) was recently allocated 5 additional Environmental Health Specialist Positions. Recruitments for these positions will go out this fiscal year. In addition, 3 existing vacant positions were filled on July 6th and all 3 staff were assigned to the consumer protection unit where the MEHKO program will be housed. The MEHKO program will not begin accepting applications until January 2027 and the division believes this will be adequate time to train staff in the program.

- How complaints will be handled.

Complaints will be handled using the existing EH process for facilities. A complaint inspection will be performed and reinspection will be conducted if necessary.

- What consequences will apply.

Reinspections performed will be charged the current reinspection fee and penalties will be assessed for non compliance. The proposed ordinance has penalties/fees that are applicable to property owners thus increasing the ability for enforcement.

- How existing licensed businesses will be protected

Environmental Health's mission is to protect the public's health through education, timely inspections, and engagement with the community and this will continue if the MEHKO program is adopted in Fresno County.

- Whether the program creates unacceptable public-health or economic risks

The MEHKO program will be a 2 year pilot program with a limited number of permits issued per city and unincorporated areas (66 total.) The ordinance was developed to include additional requirements to accompany State regulations that will help mitigate many the concerns regarding food safety and risk. Fresno County's local ordinance includes guardrails that balances providing a new pathway for small businesses with clear enforcement authority to address noncompliant operations and operators. In addition, the Department will monitor for foodborne illnesses trends and consistent with current practice conduct investigations if there are multiple foodborne illness cases indicating a single food source, event, and/or location.

From: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, July 08, 2026 5:43 PM

To: District 1 <District1@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 2 <District2@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 3 <District3@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 4 <District4@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 5 <District5@fresnocountyca.gov>; Clerk/BOS <ClerkBOS@fresnocountyca.gov>; Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov>; membership@calrest.org; Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>; sacramento_do@sba.gov; bsinghallen@clia.org; Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>

Subject: Fwd: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Dear Clerk of the Board, Chairman Bredefeld, Vice Chairman Chávez, Members of the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office, County Counsel, Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division, and California Restaurant Association:

On behalf of the Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno, we are following up on the formal correspondence submitted approximately four days ago regarding the proposed MEHKO pilot ordinance scheduled for second reading and final consideration on July 14, 2026.

As of today, we have not received a substantive written response to the concerns, requests, and documentation previously submitted by the Alliance.

This is deeply concerning because the July 14 hearing is approaching quickly, and the issues raised by licensed food businesses remain unanswered.

Our prior correspondence requested, among other things:

A written MEHKO implementation and enforcement plan.

Identification of the department, administrator, and responsible officials accountable for permitting, inspections, complaint response, enforcement, suspensions, revocations, and coordination with cities.

A written status report regarding complaints, photographs, reports, and evidence submitted by the Alliance since approximately October 2025.

A staffing and resource assessment showing whether the County has sufficient inspectors, evening and weekend coverage, vehicles, funding, and complaint-response capacity.

An independent economic-impact analysis addressing the effect of the proposed pilot on licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, commercial kitchens, employees, and other regulated food businesses.

A public-health and safety assessment addressing foodborne illness, allergens, refrigeration, temperature control, potable water, wastewater, traceability, inspection access, and repeat violations.

A formal advisory committee that includes licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, MEHKO operators, Environmental Health, Code Enforcement, County administration, cities, and public-health representatives.

Public reporting of applications, permits, inspections, complaints, violations, corrective actions, suspensions, revocations, repeat violations, unresolved cases, and complaint-response times.

The Alliance is not asking for special treatment. We are asking for equal enforcement, transparency, accountability, and meaningful participation before a new food-business category is implemented.

The statewide MEHKO data shows that creating permits does not automatically eliminate unpermitted home-based food sales. The same statewide review identified hundreds of complaints involving unpermitted home-based food vendors. This is why Fresno County must have a designated implementation and enforcement team before applications are accepted or permits are issued.

If Fresno County is not prepared with staffing, procedures, inspection capacity, complaint-response timelines, allergen review, public reporting, and real consequences, then the responsible course of action is to continue the item until those safeguards are ready.

We also request the economic study or analysis used to determine that 66 MEHKO permits will benefit Fresno County without disproportionately harming existing licensed food businesses that already pay for permits, inspections, commissary services, insurance, taxes, approved equipment, refrigeration, potable water systems, wastewater disposal, payroll, rent, and other compliance costs.

Licensed businesses need answers to these questions before final approval:

Who will be responsible for implementation and enforcement?

What department will respond to complaints?

How quickly will complaints be investigated?

Will inspections occur during nights and weekends?

How will unpermitted home-based food operations be addressed?

How will the County verify meal limits, sales limits, sanitation, water, wastewater, and food safety compliance?

How will allergens such as peanut-based sauces be reviewed and controlled?

How will existing licensed food businesses be represented during implementation?

What data will be reported publicly during the pilot?

Who will be accountable if permits are issued without adequate safeguards?

Because these questions remain unanswered, the Alliance respectfully renews its request that the Board continue or postpone the July 14 second reading until the County provides written responses, publishes an implementation and enforcement plan, and gives licensed food businesses a meaningful opportunity to review and comment.

We respectfully request written confirmation that:

1. The Alliance's prior correspondence was received.
2. The prior correspondence was distributed to all five Board members.
3. The prior correspondence was included in the official administrative record.
4. This follow-up correspondence will also be included in the official administrative record for the July 14, 2026 meeting.
5. The County will provide a substantive written response before the July 14 hearing or continue the item until such response is provided.

Please provide confirmation as soon as possible due to the approaching hearing date.

Respectfully,

Jorge Granados
President
Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno** <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jul 6, 2026 at 3:13 PM

Subject: Re: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

To: Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>

Gracias Lucio No es de mucha importancia antes del 14 de julio para la nueva ordenanza del programa de mehko quedamos en espera

On Mon, Jul 6, 2026 at 10:01 AM Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov> wrote:

Thank you Jorge. El supervisor ha estado muy ocupado con reuniones y conferencias fuera de la ciudad, pero le he enviado el correo electrónico en el que solicitabas reunirte con él, y también le enviaré este correo.



Lucio Avila | Board Member Assistant

Office of Supervisor Luis Chavez

2281 Tulare St., Fresno, CA 93724

Main Office: (559) 600-3000 Direct: (559) 600-3002

Providing excellent public services to our diverse community

From: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, July 4, 2026 5:19 AM

To: District 1 <District1@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 2 <District2@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 3 <District3@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 4 <District4@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 5 <District5@fresnocountyca.gov>

Cc: Clerk/BOS <ClerkBOS@fresnocountyca.gov>; Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov>; membership@calrest.org; Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>; sacramento_do@sba.gov; bsinghallen@clia.org; Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>

Subject: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Dear Chairman Bredefeld, Vice Chairman Chávez, Members of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office, Department of Public Health, Clerk of the Board, and California Restaurant Association:

On behalf of the **Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno**, we respectfully submit this formal request for immediate administrative and legislative action before the scheduled July 14, 2026 second reading and final consideration of the proposed Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations, or MEHKO, pilot ordinance.

The Alliance represents licensed food trucks, restaurants, caterers, mobile food facilities, and other regulated food businesses that have invested substantial financial resources, labor, personal savings, and years of effort to comply with applicable public-health, safety, taxation, employment, and business requirements.

Licensed food businesses are required to pay for permits, inspections, insurance, taxes, certified equipment, refrigeration, potable water systems, waste disposal, commercial facilities, payroll, rent, workers' compensation, maintenance, and numerous other operating expenses. After satisfying these obligations, licensed businesses should not also be required to repeatedly petition the County to enforce the same public-health and food-safety laws against unpermitted operations.

I. Repeated Requests for Assistance

Since approximately October 2025, the Alliance has repeatedly and patiently requested the following:

- Enforcement against unpermitted food operations.
- Responses to complaints, reports, photographs, and other evidence submitted by Alliance members.
- Field inspections during the hours in which unlawful food sales are occurring.
- Identification of the department and officials responsible for enforcement.
- A meaningful meeting with County representatives.
- Written information regarding staffing, available resources, enforcement procedures, response times, and measurable results.

During a meeting with County representatives, Alliance members were informed that field operations directed at unpermitted food vending had not been conducted for approximately two years.

The Alliance has also received information indicating that the County may not currently have sufficient staffing or resources to fully address the unpermitted food operations already occurring throughout the County.

This creates a fundamental administrative concern:

If the County does not presently possess sufficient personnel, funding, or operational capacity to enforce existing law, how can it responsibly approve and administer a new program that will require additional permitting, inspections, complaint investigations, reporting, education, enforcement, compliance review, and follow-up?

II. Lack of Meaningful Stakeholder Participation

The proposed ordinance is proceeding toward final approval without licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, mobile food facilities, and other regulated businesses having received a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the enforcement and implementation framework.

The Alliance requested a meeting with Supervisor Luis Chávez before the second hearing. As of the date of this correspondence, the Alliance has not received a definite meeting date or a substantive written response, despite the approaching final hearing.

Licensed food businesses should not be excluded from a policy process that directly affects:

- Public health.
- Food safety.
- Fair business competition.
- Inspection standards.
- Tax compliance.
- Consumer protection.
- Enforcement resources.
- Existing jobs.
- The continued viability of established small businesses.

A public process is not meaningful merely because comments are permitted at the end of the decision-making process. Meaningful participation requires a genuine opportunity to review, question, influence, and respond to the enforcement and implementation plan before final adoption.

III. Public-Health and Consumer-Safety Concerns

Food-safety requirements are not merely administrative formalities. They exist to prevent illness, hospitalization, allergic reactions, contamination, and death.

The relevant risks include:

- Unsafe handling of meat and other potentially hazardous foods.
- Lack of adequate refrigeration.
- Improper hot- and cold-holding temperatures.
- Lack of potable water.
- Inadequate handwashing facilities.
- Cross-contamination.
- Improper sewage or wastewater disposal.
- Undeclared allergens, including peanuts.
- Lack of traceability when a consumer becomes ill.
- Difficulty identifying, locating, entering, or inspecting an operation conducted inside a private residence.
- Inadequate response to repeat violations.

The Alliance is not asserting that every home kitchen or informal food vendor causes illness. Rather, the Alliance is asserting that reduced inspection frequency, inconsistent enforcement, insufficient staffing, and unclear accountability remove safeguards that licensed businesses are required to maintain every day.

Any regulatory framework that creates different safety, inspection, and compliance standards for businesses selling similar food products must be supported by a clear, evidence-based explanation demonstrating how the public will remain adequately protected.

IV. Economic Disparity and Lack of Regulatory Parity

Restaurants and permitted mobile food facilities may be subject to multiple inspections, substantial equipment expenses, rent, insurance, taxation, payroll, workers' compensation, commercial kitchen requirements, vehicle or facility maintenance, and other continuing compliance obligations.

Under the proposed system, MEHKO operators may be subject to a materially different regulatory, inspection, and cost structure.

That distinction raises a serious issue of economic and regulatory parity.

It is inequitable for one category of food business to bear the full cost of compliance while another category competes in the same market with lower operating expenses, fewer inspections, different facility requirements, and potentially reduced enforcement exposure.

The smallest licensed businesses are often the most severely affected. They pay to operate, pay to comply, and pay taxes that fund County government. They must then devote additional time and resources to asking the same government to perform enforcement responsibilities for which it is already funded.

A lawful pathway for new entrepreneurs should not be created by shifting the economic disadvantage onto businesses that have already complied with the law.

implementation.

V. Formal Requests for Board and Administrative Action

The Alliance respectfully requests that the Board and County administration take the following actions:

1. **Continue or postpone the July 14, 2026 second reading and final vote** until licensed food businesses have received a meaningful stakeholder meeting and written responses to the concerns raised.
2. Require County staff to prepare and publish a **written enforcement and implementation plan** before final adoption.
3. Identify the specific department, administrator, and position responsible for:
 - Permitting.
 - Inspections.

- Complaint intake and response.
 - Field enforcement.
 - Tax compliance.
 - Repeat violations.
 - Suspensions and revocations.
 - Program reporting.
 - Coordination with cities and other agencies.
4. Provide a written status report regarding complaints, evidence, and reports submitted by the Alliance since October 2025.
 5. State when regular field enforcement against unpermitted food operations will resume.
 6. Provide a written staffing and resource assessment identifying:
 - The number of currently available inspectors.
 - Evening and weekend coverage.
 - Vehicles and equipment.
 - Complaint-response capacity.
 - Current vacancies.
 - Funding available for the pilot.
 - Additional personnel required.
 - Anticipated workload created by the proposed program.
 7. Require an independent economic-impact analysis addressing the effects on:
 - Licensed restaurants.
 - Licensed food trucks.
 - Caterers.
 - Commercial kitchens.
 - Employees.
 - Property owners.
 - Other regulated food businesses.
 8. Require a public-health and safety assessment addressing:
 - Foodborne illness.
 - Allergens.
 - Refrigeration.
 - Temperature control.
 - Potable water.
 - Wastewater and sewage.
 - Waste disposal.
 - Fire safety.
 - Consumer complaints.
 - Traceability.
 - Inspection access to private residences.
 9. Establish a formal advisory committee that includes representatives from:

- Licensed restaurants.
- Licensed food trucks.
- Caterers.
- MEHKO operators.
- Environmental Health.
- Code Enforcement.
- County administration.
- Participating cities.
- Consumer or public-health representatives.

10. Require public quarterly reporting that identifies:

- Number of applications.
- Number of permits issued.
- Number of inspections.
- Number of unannounced inspections.
- Number and type of complaints received.
- Violations documented.
- Corrective actions ordered.
- Suspensions or revocations.
- Repeat violations.
- Unresolved cases.
- Average complaint-response times.

11. Include a formal six-month review and a procedure allowing the County to suspend, modify, or terminate the pilot if staffing, inspection, enforcement, economic, or public-health objectives are not being met.

VI. Accountability and Administrative Capacity

The Alliance has raised these concerns respectfully and patiently for months.

At this stage, the Alliance is no longer requesting only additional discussion, informal assurances, or future consideration. The Alliance is requesting:

- Written answers.
- Identified responsible officials.
- Specific actions.
- Enforceable deadlines.
- Field enforcement.
- Transparent reporting.
- Measurable results.

If a department lacks sufficient personnel, funding, vehicles, legal authority, or operational capacity, County leadership should disclose that deficiency and provide the resources necessary to perform the required work.

If an administrator, department, or office is unable or unwilling to carry out its assigned responsibilities, those responsibilities should be reassigned to an official or department possessing the authority, competence, resources, and capacity to perform them.

This request is not personal in nature. It is a request for basic governmental accountability, administrative competence, and equal enforcement of the law.

VII. Request for Inclusion in the Official Record

The Alliance respectfully requests that the Clerk of the Board:

- Include this correspondence in the official public record for the July 14, 2026 Board of Supervisors meeting.
- Distribute this correspondence to all five members of the Board.
- Include it with all materials related to the proposed MEHKO ordinance.
- Confirm receipt in writing.
- Provide the agenda item number once the agenda is published.
- Preserve this correspondence as part of the legislative and administrative record concerning the proposed pilot program.

The Alliance further requests a substantive written response from the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrative Office, and the Department of Public Health before the July 14 hearing.

VIII. Conclusion

The Alliance is not opposed to entrepreneurship, lawful opportunity, or the development of new small businesses.

The Alliance is opposed to approving a program without adequate staffing, meaningful industry participation, economic analysis, clear enforcement authority, transparent accountability, and equal protection for businesses that already comply with the law.

The Board should not approve the program first and determine later:

- Who will enforce it.
- How enforcement will be funded.
- Whether sufficient personnel exist.
- How complaints will be handled.
- What consequences will apply.
- How existing licensed businesses will be protected.
- Whether the program creates unacceptable public-health or economic risks.

Public health, consumer safety, fair competition, administrative accountability, and the survival of licensed small businesses require careful planning before final approval.

For these reasons, the Alliance respectfully requests that the July 14, 2026 second reading be continued until the County provides the requested information, meetings, safeguards, and written implementation plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Jorge Granados

President

Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno

ITEM #44
07/14/2026

From: Unit 19 <unit19fc@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2026 10:50 PM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: Board Agenda Item 44, July 14, 2026
Attachments: MEHKO letter to BOS.pdf

CAUTION!!! - EXTERNAL EMAIL - THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

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Dear Clerk of the Board of Supervisors,

Attached is a letter regarding BOS meeting agenda Item 44 -Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) pilot program, schedule for July 14, 2026.

We respectfully request that this letter be provided to the Board of Supervisors as part of its discussion of this matter.

Thank you for your assistance.

Best regards,



Graciela Bravo
President

559-840-6439 // unit19fc@hotmail.com

July 8, 2026

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of Fresno
2281 Tulare Street, Room 301
Fresno, CA 93721

Re: Micro Enterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) Inspection frequency

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I am writing on behalf of Unit 19, Professional Association of Employees and Environmental Health members, regarding the proposed inspections of MEHKOs in Fresno County.

While EH inspectors assigned to inspect food facilities in Fresno County are supportive of the goals behind the MEHKO program, and certainly believe that in order to make it work, inspections are necessary; we do not believe that we can absorb an additional 132 inspections per year (if 66 of these locations will require two inspections a year).

Consumer Food Program EH inspectors are currently assigned between 320-400 facilities to inspect, not including complaints, mobile food operations, and community events. With the increase in food facilities and programs to enforce in our growing county, it is difficult to meet the current inspection frequencies. The addition of MEHKO, even as a pilot program, places an extra burden on inspectors. MEHKO inspections, like Cottage Food Operation inspections, will require inspectors to coordinate and work in teams of two for safety, causing time away from other inspections.

We would appreciate your willingness to discuss this and delay the final decision to increase the number of inspections for MEHKOs. Thank you for your time, public service, and consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Board.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Graciela Bravo".

Graciela Bravo, REHS
Unit 19 PAE President

ITEM #44
07/14/2026

From: susan williams <srwillia@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, July 10, 2026 6:21 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: 7/14/2026 BOS Agenda Item #44, File #26-0543; Microenterprise Home Kitchens
Attachments: BOS home kitchens.2026.pdf

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Please distribute to the addressed recipients and acknowledge receipt.

Thank you,

Sue Williams

SUNNYSIDE PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 8096-Fresno, CA 93747

July 10, 2026

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
2281 Tulare Street #301
Fresno, CA 93721

Via email: ClerkBOS@FresnoCountyCA.gov

RE: 7/14/26 BOS Agenda Item #44, File # 26-0543 Ordinance amending Fresno County Ordinance Code, Title 8 Health and Safety, to add Chapter 8.51 "Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations"

Chairman Bredefeld and Members of the Board,

Like many in the community, we were surprised to read that your Board unanimously approved, with motions requesting sales tax and additional inspections, a Two-Year Pilot program allowing Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKO) in Fresno County. Although this was only the first hearing, and only those from the restaurant industry and supporters of the proposal were there to present testimony, the second hearing is now on the consent calendar to be approved at the July 14th board meeting. An ordinance that has the potential to greatly change what is allowed in residential neighborhoods in every corner of Fresno County should be thoroughly vetted by both the government agency that will be monitoring its implementation and those most impacted by the ordinance. Moreover, there should be some effort to educate the public on what is being proposed followed by a period of public comment.

After reviewing the proposed ordinance, the Board of Directors of the Sunnyside Property Owners Association have the following questions and comments.

- Who will handle complaints about traffic, parking, noise, smoke, or odors?
- How will code enforcement work in the county islands?
- Will there be a public list of permitted home kitchens?
- How will the County keep too many permits from being concentrated in one neighborhood?
- Will there be a way to track neighborhood complaints throughout the two-year pilot?

Lack of Parity

Restaurants are currently restricted to commercial or mixed-use zones and undergo extensive planning department review to determine ingress/egress, capacity, traffic, hours of operation, and parking requirements. Business licenses and liability insurance are required, local and state sales tax are generated and collected, jobs created, and a host of regulatory agencies prescribe mandates including but not limited to food surfaces, food safety, plumbing, grease disposal, ventilation, and fire suppression systems. Additionally, they are inspected four times a year/unannounced. Micro-enterprise home kitchen operators are only subject to an initial inspection and one announced annual inspection. They are exempt from the kitchen requirements imposed on restaurants. And unlike Class II Home Occupations currently allowed in the county limiting customers to 10/day and prohibiting uses that create a detrimental effect on neighborhoods, MEHKO's will not be subject to the same Director Review and Approval process, public notice or input.

Funding/enforcement

A 2023-24 Civil Grand Jury Report found that Fresno County Health Inspectors were unable to meet their current inspection responsibilities. In response, the county hired seven additional food

inspectors to handle existing caseloads. The \$155,451 grant the county received to study MEHKO's has a balance of \$30,000. Staff has stated that this reserve, coupled with fees, will be enough to regulate the sixty-six MEHKO permits. Funding sources other than "the yet-to-be-determined permit fees" have not been identified beyond the two-year trial period.

Whereas food complaints will be handled by Fresno County Environmental Health, nuisance complaints will default to code enforcement. Incorporated cities may be able to handle the additional caseload, but it is unrealistic and inappropriate to assume the ten county code enforcement officers assigned to the county islands and unincorporated cities can.

State law lacks protections for neighborhoods.

AB626 and AB377 prevent counties that opt in from imposing requirements that would lessen the impact to neighborhoods and increase food safety. The proposed ordinance would allow home kitchen operators to cook and serve food from seven in the morning until ten at night. There are no capacity limits based on the home's square footage, parking requirements, or standards in place to prevent an over-concentration of MEHKO's. Because MEHKO's are exempt from rules imposed on commercial kitchens and commissaries, odors and smoke from cooking hoods and permitted BBQs or smokers will become problematic. Without regulations specific to these nuisances, code enforcement lacks any authority to remediate them.

Opportunities already exist.

For the home cook, Fresno's culinary kitchens offer an opportunity to prepare food in a certified kitchen prior to sales to the public. Commercial appliances and food-grade prep stations are required, and facilities undergo from 1-3 unannounced inspections a year. Fresno County's Cottage Food Operation also provides an opportunity for home cooks to either sell food listed on the California Department of Health's approved list of foods, from the home or to permitted restaurants, grocery, and mobile trucks (depending on the type of license).

Entrepreneurism should be encouraged when feasible, studied for impacts and thoroughly vetted. Unfortunately there are not enough health inspectors to handle existing cases, much less increased caseloads and while cities may have the code enforcement personnel to handle complaints, county islands and unincorporated cities do not. We do not believe this proposed ordinance allowing MEHKO's in neighborhoods is the best use of the county's limited resources. We would instead encourage a collaborative partnership between the restaurant industry and public entities to explore grant funding for additional commissaries and individual scholarships, which in turn would provide even more opportunities for home cooks interested in joining the restaurant scene.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sue Williams
Corresponding Secretary

Cc: Supervisor Pacheco - District 1
Supervisor Bredefeld - District 2
Supervisor Chavez - District 3
Supervisor Mendes - District 4
Supervisor Magsig - District 5
Joe Prado, Director of Fresno County Public Health

From: Esau Flores <eflores@calrest.org>
Sent: Saturday, July 11, 2026 8:00 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Cc: District 1; District 2; District 3; District 4; District 5
Subject: CA Restaurant Association - Agenda Item 44 MEHKO Comment Letter
Attachments: Fresno County MEHKO Letter 07.14.pdf

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Report Suspicious

Hello,

The California Restaurant Association (CRA) would like to submit this formal comment letter regarding Fresno County's Board of Supervisors' July 14, 2026, meeting. Specifically, regarding **Board Agenda Item 44** - proposed Ordinance amending Fresno County Ordinance Code, Title 8 Health and Safety, to add Chapter 8.51 Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations.

Esau Flores
Legislative Coordinator

California Restaurant Association
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 2000
Sacramento, CA 95814

T: 916.431.2774
eflores@calrest.org



While all information released by the California Restaurant Association (CRA) is intended to provide accurate information on the subject covered, the CRA does not provide legal advice and any information provided by the CRA shall not constitute legal advice. You are encouraged to consult your attorney, accountant, or other appropriate professional, as needed.

Confidentiality note:

This electronic message transmission contains information from the California Restaurant Association which may be confidential or privileged. The information is intended to be for the use of the individual or entity named above. If you are not the intended recipient, be aware that any disclosure, copying, distribution or use of the contents of this information is prohibited.

If you have received this electronic transmission in error, please immediately notify us by telephone at 800.765.4842.

July 14, 2026

Bernice Seidel
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
2281 Tulare St, Room 301
Fresno, CA 93721

RE: Opposition – Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation Implementation – Agenda Item #44

The California Restaurant Association (CRA) is the definitive voice of the state's food service community, representing nearly 22,000 eating establishments. The Fresno Chapter of the CRA is a robust and very active group of restaurants representing a wide variety of restaurant concept types, cuisines, and cultures throughout our local region.

In this letter, we would like to express feedback regarding Fresno County's proposal to establish a two-year pilot program that would grant up to 66 permits, allowing individuals to prepare and sell meals directly from their homes – otherwise known as Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs).

We appreciate your time and hope this letter helps advance the shared goal of maintaining high health and safety standards for all food preparation, ensuring environmental stewardship, adherence to labor laws, and nurturing law-abiding brick-and-mortar restaurants, and ensuring that the impacts of such proposals on local communities are adequately considered.

I. Public Health, Food Safety, and Accessibility

While the state legislature passed AB 626 (2018), the County should effectively evaluate and consider the health and safety issues that such a program poses. The CRA is committed to enhancing safety and reducing any risk that can lead to foodborne illness. Similarly, brick-and-mortar restaurants are purpose-built environments, designed with strict health and safety standards in mind.

These purpose-built environments include proper temperature controls for cold storage and hot foods, strict sanitation practices – which includes food prep and storage areas that have separate sinks for food and non-food uses. Commercial kitchens also have built-in fire mitigation systems and response requirements – this includes commercial hoods, fire suppression systems with specialized wet chemical agents, along with sprinkler systems, and proper employee training.

The reality is that MEHKOs are in homes, and residential kitchens rarely have this type of equipment or systems. This not only increases the risk of cross-contamination but also poses serious safety issues. For example, often, the same areas used for hand-washing are also utilized for food preparation, and food preparation areas will often be in the same general areas as household animals – such realities are unavoidable in people's homes that were never intended for commercial food preparation.

Restaurants are fiercely regulated, and rightfully so – food preparation is a massive responsibility, and we regulate as such in commercial settings. Accessibility also remains an issue as restaurants are required to adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Ultimately, the CRA urges the County not to set a double standard for kitchens that would forgo the health and safety of our communities by allowing a MEHKO program to exist without addressing key issues – especially considering that the County is only allowed to perform one routine inspection per year under state law.

II. Infrastructure and Environmental Stewardship

Today, restaurants are mandated to install and maintain grease trap interceptors within each food facility, preventing excess fats, oils, and grease from entering the municipal sewer systems and existing plumbing lines – ultimately avoiding sewage spills and harmful impacts to the environment. Should a large quantity of MEHKOs be approved within one residential area, the impacts could be severe, including irreparable harm to the surrounding environment from resulting sewage backups, should disposal of certain products happen improperly. Ultimately, our sewer systems were not designed with MEHKOs in mind.

Additionally, under state legislation such as SB 1383 (2016), restaurants are required to partner with food recovery organizations to donate any excess food – subject to restrictions. Additionally, under SB 1383, certain restaurants also follow organic waste recycling practices to reduce emissions. The CRA questions whether these MEHKOs would be required to follow the same standards that many restaurants are subject to. If not, this is a clear policy decision to enable a two-tier enforcement model that puts restaurants at a significant disadvantage and undermines the state's environmental goals.

III. Traffic and Parking

If individuals begin operating a micro-enterprise kitchen out of their home, it could lead to significant traffic, circulation, and parking impacts within surrounding neighborhoods. This could pose particular issues in a multi-unit residential community. Properly zoned restaurants have minimum parking space requirements, with zoning restrictions that take into account traffic volume, as well as flow, as designed by city planners.

IV. Strained Resources & End of Local Assistance

AB 178 – Budget Act of 2022, established a grant program that is currently administered by the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH). While the County received an initial grant, the expenditure deadline for these funds is August 31 of this year, approximately four months before the proposed pilot's start date of Jan 1, 2027. Moreover, CCDEH has stated that an extension is unlikely.

This raises serious concerns for the CRA, especially as the County faces budget pressures in the upcoming fiscal year. The CRA is concerned that any additional resources required to regulate a pilot MEHKO program could result in raised environmental health fees for existing brick-and-mortar restaurants – forcing them to subsidize the cost of MEHKOs. This, of course,

would be wholly inappropriate. While we acknowledge that the MEHKO program is intended to be self-funded, we want to caution that this intention may not be realistic.

V. Enforcement and Implementation Concerns

While there are restrictions outlined in statute regarding what and how much a MEHKO can sell, along with other limitations, the CRA has serious concerns regarding the enforcement of such restrictions. How would the County ensure that these limitations are not exceeded? While there are record-keeping requirements, there are various ways to circumvent these mandates for MEHKOs.

There are further considerations regarding the operation of a MEHKO, including alcohol service, food delivery, and a laundry list of other factors and restrictions that MEHKOs face. Without adequate resources, the County will be unable to carry out adequate and fair enforcement. Who will ensure that alcohol is not unlawfully served or sold and that delivery restrictions are followed? Furthermore, how will the cap on sales be enforced if compliance relies upon operator-reported records – records that can unfortunately be easily manipulated?

A majority of jurisdictions have not opted in for many of the reasons and questions raised in this letter. In response to this, Assembly Bill 2315 (AB 2315) would have mandated every local jurisdiction to create a MEHKO program, irrespective of the limitations that we've outlined in our letter thus far. AB 2315 died in the state legislature, and the CRA urges the County to consider lessons learned from other jurisdictions and consider the fact that only 18 of 62 jurisdictions have opted into a MEHKO program.

VI. Labor protections

California has some of the most robust labor laws in the nation, with oversight provided by both the state and local bodies. However, if MEHKOs are allowed to operate, how will Fresno County ensure that the same labor protections and standards that restaurants are held to will also be followed by MEHKOs? The reality is that while this ordinance allows up to one full-time-equivalent employee, excluding family and household members from that employee count limitation, it's unclear how applicable wage-and-hour requirements will be monitored. How will overtime pay be enforced? Mandatory meal and rest breaks are required by California law. How will those laws be enforced behind closed, private doors? Importantly, will labor enforcement agencies be able to enter MEHKO operations for unannounced, on-site inspections like they are for other businesses? These are just a few of the questions that are imperative for the County to address.

VII. Struggles of the Industry

CRA's members have stressed that current pressures have made operating brick-and-mortar restaurants borderline untenable. A survey of our members noted that over 40 percent were not profitable. Over the past years, restaurants have struggled with 40-year high inflation rates, escalating wage pressures, excessive rents, tariffs, reduced foot traffic, and increased layers of regulation at both the state and local levels.

Brick-and-mortar restaurants operate as one of the top sales tax generators for local jurisdictions – tax generators that help fund first responders, libraries, and other local resources. Efforts should be made by the County to nurture the brick-and-mortar restaurant community, not efforts that would effectively compromise public food safety and create an avenue for restaurant-like operations, but without all the responsibilities, costs, and restrictions.

Given the challenges raised – and questions not yet answered, we would welcome the County to consider ways to help the existing restaurant community, one of the most diverse employer communities around. More than 80% of restaurant chefs, a senior role, are people of color; nearly 70% of managers and supervisors are people of color; and 60% are owned by people of color.

VIII. Conclusion

The CRA urges the County to consider these challenges as it deliberates whether to move forward with establishing a pilot MEHKO program. Restaurants follow strict health, safety, environmental, labor, and accessibility requirements. By establishing a program that does not hold MEHKOs to comparable standards, the County would forgo decades of best practices for food service businesses and undermine a community that remains a highly productive partner and leader in local sales tax generation.

Given the critical nature of these questions, we must respectfully ask that the County not move forward with the proposal to establish a MEHKO pilot program until these crucial questions are adequately answered. We also encourage the County to explore alternative methods, such as commissary kitchens, which provide lower barriers to entry, make enforcement more practical, and remove the challenges and secrecy that come with operating behind closed, private doors with extremely limited oversight from local public health officials.

Sincerely,



Matt Sutton
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs & Public Policy
California Restaurant Association

Cc: Supervisor Pacheco – District 1
Supervisor Bredefeld – District 2
Supervisor Chavez – District 3
Supervisor Mendes – District 4
Supervisor Magsig – District 5

Item 44
7/14/2026 BOS Meeting
(

July 11, 2026

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
2281 Tulare Street #301
Fresno, CA 93721

RE: 7/14/26 BOS Agenda Item #44, File # 26-0543 Ordinance amending Fresno County Ordinance Code, Title 8 Health and Safety, to add Chapter 8.51 "Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations"

To all members of Fresno County Board of Supervisors,

I am a longtime resident and property owner in Fresno County.

I vehemently oppose this ordinance.

Residential areas should be a quiet respite for family members young and old. Our current zoning laws ensure that residential areas maintain their character and do not become commercialized.

Ask yourself this question: Would you want to live next door to this business?

Hopefully your answer is no.

We already have problems with unpermitted event centers in the area and allowing Microenterprise kitchens in our neighborhoods sets a precedent for even more commercial activities.

Things to consider:

- Noise pollution
- Air pollution (added barbecues, smokers and traffic)
- Traffic (30 plus cars is not good for children on residential streets)
- Safety (most county areas have no sidewalks)
- Parking
- Public health (no unannounced inspections)
- DUIs (if ABC licenses are approved)
- There is not enough health or code enforcement personnel to protect property owners from abuses of this ordinance.

There are plenty of alternative opportunities for the home cooks other than disrupting quiet residential areas. Please protect property owners with a **NO** vote on this ordinance!

Sincerely,
Heidi Nakayama
5459 E. Atchison Street
Fresno, CA 93727
559-285-8349

cc: ClerkBOS@FresnoCountyCA.gov

From: Prado, Joe
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2026 12:45 PM
To: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno; District 1; Avila, Lucio; District 2; District 3; District 4; District 5; Clerk/BOS; clerk@fresno.gov
Cc: Armstrong, Erica; Sandoval, Claudia; Solis, Trinidad; Hill, Edward; Nerland, Paul; Flores Becker, Amina; Conchas, Bertha
Subject: RE: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Good Afternoon,

Here are additional responses to the 13 questions. Bertha Conchas will reach out to set up a time meet with the Environmental Health team and myself.

1. What is the written enforcement protocol among Environmental Health, City Code Enforcement, County Code Enforcement, planning, and zoning?

There are established workflows with each of the applicable code enforcement agencies to coordinate and respond to issues that fall within the respective jurisdictional authority.

2. What will the response times be for complaints, including complaints made at night and on weekends?

Response time for MEHKOs will follow our standard process for **permitted facilities**, which is within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint. Emergency complaints and foodborne illness complaints are responded the same day of receipt or within one day of receiving the 72 hr food history from the complainant.

3. How will the County enforce the law against home-based food operators who do not apply for a MEHKO permit?

A complaint will be logged, education will be provided to the operator about the MEHKO permitting process, and a notice of violation will be issued.

4. How will allergen risks and undeclared ingredients be controlled

MEHKOs are required to comply with California Retail Food Code Section 114093.5, just as other permanent food facilities are. They must provide written notification of major food allergens that the food facility knows or reasonably should know are contained as ingredients in each menu item. This information will be verified by Environmental Health staff during the application process, when a menu and standard operating procedures are required to be submitted. Compliance with this section will be verified during any routine and complaint inspections.

5. What is the actual projected cost of enforcing the pilot program?

Implementation of the MEHKO program is estimated to be at one full time equivalent staff. There are start-up costs that will be offset with grant funds. After the pilot project the department would reassess actual costs and propose any necessary adjustment to the MEHKO program if warranted.

6. How much revenue is expected from only 66 permits?

Upon Board approval of MEHKO program the Department will work with the Auditor/Controller - Treasurer/Tax Collector's office to calculate the appropriate fee in accordance in general accounting standards.

7. How can 66 permits help finance five additional positions and all related enforcement responsibilities?

66 permits will not finance five additional positions. These positions are already fully funded through existing consumer protection programs. Environmental Health approximates this position will not require more than 1FTE. The 2 year pilot program will provide the data necessary to determine staff time for plan review, inspections, and complaint enforcement.

8. What specific protections will be provided to existing licensed businesses?

The Department will continue to enforce all regulations as required by State and local ordinances.

9. Will the County publish quarterly reports showing permits issued, complaints received, inspections conducted, violations found, reinspections performed, penalties imposed, suspensions, revocations, and foodborne illness investigations?

Environmental Health currently posts all facility closures on the EH website on a monthly basis and this practice will include MEHKOs. In addition, all EH inspections are readily available to the public on the Environmental Health Document Portal located at <https://www.fresnohealthinspections.com>. EH will provide a report to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, 90 days prior to the pilot end date and at any other interval that is requested by the Board.

10. Why must the ordinance be approved now if applications will not begin until January 2027?

Passage of the Ordinance now provides the Department adequate time to educate the public on the MEHKO law and permitting process. EH will also continue program development, which includes updating State forms to include the additional requirements mandated in Fresno County's local ordinance. In addition, it allows local cities to evaluate the ordinance and make any necessary adjustments to their local ordinances if necessary.

11. Why not first resolve the current problems involving informal food sales and unpermitted operations before opening a new program?

This is a statewide issue that is affecting local counties throughout the area and one that Environmental Health takes seriously. Environmental Health continues routine enforcement on unpermitted vendors during normal business hours, as well as larger food safety enforcement in

both the cities and unincorporated areas throughout Fresno County with the assistance of local police departments and code enforcement officers. This issue continues to be a challenge as unpermitted vendors are often mobile with no set locations or operating hours, and operators are often unwilling to name the owner of their operation. The California Department of Public Health is starting an unpermitted food vendor pilot group which will develop resources and Statewide procedure standards and Fresno County Environmental Health has already submitted interest in joining the pilot group.

12. When will the County meet directly with our Alliance to hear from the licensed businesses that will be affected?

The Department will assist with organizing a meeting the Alliance. My assistant Bertha Conchas, cc'd on this email can assist in coordinating.

13. If the County believes additional staffing is necessary for a pilot program consisting of only 66 MEHKO permits, how does it justify its position that it currently has sufficient capacity to supervise approximately 1,800 restaurants, 550 mobile food permits, and the informal operations that have already been reported?

Environmental Health (EH) was recently allocated 5 additional Environmental Health Specialist Positions. Recruitments for these positions will go out this fiscal year. In addition, 3 existing vacant positions were filled on July 6th and all 3 staff were assigned to the consumer protection unit where the MEHKO program will be housed. The MEHKO program will not begin accepting applications until January 2027 and the division believes this will be adequate time to train staff in the program.

From: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, July 09, 2026 10:21 PM

To: Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 1 <District1@fresnocountyca.gov>; Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 2 <District2@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 3 <District3@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 4 <District4@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 5 <District5@fresnocountyca.gov>; Clerk/BOS <ClerkBOS@fresnocountyca.gov>; clerk@fresno.gov; Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

CAUTION!!!! - EXTERNAL EMAIL - THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

[Report Suspicious](#)

Good morning, Mr. Prado:

Thank you for your response and for addressing the questions raised in our July 4 email. We appreciate that the County has provided additional information regarding enforcement, staffing, funding, complaint handling, and the MEHKO pilot program.

However, after reviewing your response, we continue to have serious concerns that we believe must be addressed before the ordinance moves forward for final approval.

First, with all due respect, you have not attended a meeting with our Alliance to hear directly about the reality currently facing licensed businesses, restaurants, food trucks, caterers, and food vendors that operate with permits. These concerns are not theoretical, nor do they exist only on paper. They are real problems occurring every day: unpermitted food sales, outdoor cooking operations at private residences, residential food businesses, unfair competition, allergen risks, inconsistent enforcement, and frustration among businesses that have paid for permits, inspections, insurance, taxes, equipment, commissary services, and every other legal requirement.

A written response is appreciated, but it does not replace listening directly to the businesses that will bear the consequences of this decision. Before approving the ordinance, we respectfully request that you and the appropriate County representatives meet with our Alliance to hear firsthand what is happening in the community.

We would also like to address the issue of penalties. We understand that the proposed ordinance includes penalties and fees for those who fail to comply. However, penalties only work when there is a real capacity to enforce them. The primary issue is not whether penalties exist on paper. The real issue is whether Environmental Health, Code Enforcement, the cities, and the County have the staffing, training, time, and coordination necessary to enforce them consistently.

Laws, codes, and permit requirements already exist to control unpermitted food operations. Nevertheless, many of the current problems affecting licensed businesses remain unresolved. Our Alliance has already reported unpermitted food operations, food sales from private homes, outdoor cooking operations, zoning problems, allergen risks, and other irregularities to the Health Department and Code Enforcement. Several additional violations have also been reported verbally. However, many of these operations continue.

For that reason, we believe it would be more responsible to resolve the existing problems that are already affecting us before opening a new program that may create additional responsibilities for the same agencies that have not yet been able to fully control the existing problem.

Your response states that Environmental Health will be the primary agency responsible for enforcing the MEHKO program and that public nuisance complaints will be handled by city and County Code Enforcement offices. Respectfully, this confirms that the program does not involve Environmental Health alone. It also involves Code Enforcement, zoning, public nuisances, neighborhoods, parking, traffic, garbage, outdoor cooking, signage, potentially unauthorized sales, and consumer safety.

For this reason, we believe the agencies that will actually be responsible for these areas must also provide answers, not only Environmental Health. The city, the County, Code Enforcement, and zoning and planning departments must clearly explain how they will address residential operations, unpermitted sales, public nuisances, the use of private property, neighborhood complaints, and businesses operating outside the rules.

We are also concerned that the County is relying on staff who have not yet been fully recruited, hired, trained, or tested within an active MEHKO program. Your response states that five additional Environmental Health Specialist positions were allocated and that recruitment will take place during this

fiscal year. However, those positions have not yet been fully recruited, filled, trained, or evaluated under an actual MEHKO enforcement system.

If the County has not been able to fully resolve the current informal operations that have already been reported to Environmental Health and Code Enforcement, how can it assure the public that it will be able to effectively control a new program?

The data from the statewide MEHKO study further increases our concern. The study reviewed the experience of other counties and reported 898 MEHKO permits issued, 32 complaints against permitted MEHKO operations, and 606 complaints against unpermitted home-based food vendors. This demonstrates that the largest problem was not limited to permitted MEHKO operators, but involved home-based food operations operating without permits.

That is exactly our concern in Fresno County. A pilot program limited to 66 permits will not automatically resolve the informal food market. On the contrary, without a strong, clear, and consistent enforcement plan, the program may create greater confusion, more unpermitted food sales, and more unfair competition against licensed businesses.

The same study also indicates that, of the 638 total complaints reviewed, approximately 85% were submitted to Environmental Health and 71% of the complaints did not result in an enforcement action. These numbers are important because they demonstrate that the community generally contacts Environmental Health, even though many complaints also involve zoning, public nuisances, traffic, parking, garbage, use of private property, or sales conducted outside regulatory requirements.

Therefore, we ask: If most complaints are ultimately directed to Environmental Health, but many of the underlying problems actually require the involvement of Code Enforcement, zoning, the cities, and the County, what is the written coordination protocol among all these agencies?

We also remain concerned about allergens and consumer safety. We have already raised concerns regarding sauces, undeclared ingredients, and allergens such as peanuts. These issues may place members of the public at serious risk. If these matters are already difficult to monitor in licensed businesses, they will be even more difficult to control when food is sold from private homes, through social media, from garages, patios, or informal kitchens.

Regarding funding, your response states that enforcement will be funded through permit fees and applicable penalties. Respectfully, we need an actual financial explanation. How does the economic analysis support the conclusion that 66 permits can help finance inspections, complaint investigations, reinspections, staffing, training, coordination with Code Enforcement, legal notices, penalties, and follow-up enforcement?

We also ask directly: How can a program consisting of only 66 permits be expected to support the cost of five additional positions and all the responsibilities this program will create?

We request that the County provide a clear financial breakdown, including projected permit revenue, projected penalty revenue, personnel costs, training costs, inspection costs, complaint investigation costs, reinspection costs, and the costs of coordinating with Code Enforcement.

We also request that the County be honest and specific about how it will protect existing licensed businesses. A general statement regarding the mission of Environmental Health does not answer the central question. Licensed businesses already pay for permits, inspections, insurance, taxes, equipment, refrigeration, commissary services, waste disposal, fire safety, business licenses, and ongoing compliance.

We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for fairness and a level playing field. We ask that the County enforce the rules that already exist before creating another program that may increase the burden on inspectors, Code Enforcement, cities, neighborhoods, and businesses that comply with the law.

We also want to emphasize that the economic consequences for licensed businesses are already being seen in Fresno. We are not speaking only about a possible future concern. In recent years, we have seen restaurants, small businesses, and food trucks close or reduce their operations because they could no longer sustain the costs of operations, permits, inspections, insurance, rent, equipment, commissary services, taxes, payroll, and unequal competition.

The closure of businesses such as Cardenas Restaurant, along with other small restaurants and food trucks that have closed or reduced their operations, reflects a reality that cannot be ignored. Licensed businesses are bearing all the costs of legal compliance while many informal operations continue selling food without the same obligations.

The central question is: Why is the County attempting to authorize another new program when it has not yet resolved the current problems already affecting established businesses?

We are also concerned about the staffing rationale. If the County is stating that a pilot program consisting of only 66 MEHKO permits will require five additional positions, in addition to the existing personnel assigned to the Consumer Protection Unit, then these numbers deserve a clearer explanation.

Environmental Health currently oversees approximately 1,800 restaurants and approximately 550 mobile food permits or mobile food businesses. This represents approximately 2,350 existing food operations requiring oversight, inspections, follow-up, complaint handling, and enforcement.

If the County considers it necessary to increase staffing for 66 new MEHKO permits, how can it justify the conclusion that the current system has sufficient capacity to supervise thousands of existing businesses while also adding a new program?

Using a simple comparison, eight staff members for 66 permits would represent a staffing ratio of approximately 12%. If that same ratio were applied to the approximately 2,350 food operations already under supervision, hundreds of employees would be required. We understand that not every program requires the exact same staffing ratio, but this comparison demonstrates that the County must clearly explain how it calculated its actual enforcement capacity.

The numbers do not add up if the County recognizes the need for additional staff to oversee 66 new permits while, at the same time, it has not been able to effectively resolve the current problems involving informal operations, pending complaints, unpermitted vendors, outdoor cooking operations, allergen risks, and the lack of coordination with Code Enforcement.

Before authorizing another program, the County should demonstrate that it can enforce the rules that already exist. Otherwise, the result may be greater disorder, more complaints, increased pressure on inspectors, and additional economic harm to licensed businesses that comply with the law.

For all these reasons, we respectfully ask the Board of Supervisors to take a moment to carefully consider these issues before approving this ordinance. Fresno County and the City of Fresno already have many unresolved problems involving unpermitted food sales, outdoor cooking operations, zoning violations, informal vendors, garbage, public nuisances, and unfair competition against licensed businesses.

If MEHKO applications will not begin until January 2027, there is no urgent reason to approve this ordinance immediately without a complete implementation plan. The County has time to pause, listen, correct the deficiencies, and create a more responsible system.

We therefore respectfully request that the final vote be postponed and that the County use this time to establish a formal advisory committee before approving the ordinance.

This committee should include representatives of licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, mobile food vendors, MEHKO representatives, Environmental Health, City Code Enforcement, County Code Enforcement, planning and zoning representatives, public health representatives, consumers, and small businesses.

Our position is not opposition to opportunities for small businesses. Our position is that any new food program must be realistic, enforceable, transparent, financially viable, and fair to licensed businesses that have already invested substantially to comply with the law.

We respectfully request written responses to the following questions:

1. What is the written enforcement protocol among Environmental Health, City Code Enforcement, County Code Enforcement, planning, and zoning?
2. What will the response times be for complaints, including complaints made at night and on weekends?
3. How will the County enforce the law against home-based food operators who do not apply for a MEHKO permit?
4. How will allergen risks and undeclared ingredients be controlled?
5. What is the actual projected cost of enforcing the pilot program?
6. How much revenue is expected from only 66 permits?
7. How can 66 permits help finance five additional positions and all related enforcement responsibilities?
8. What specific protections will be provided to existing licensed businesses?
9. Will the County publish quarterly reports showing permits issued, complaints received, inspections conducted, violations found, reinspections performed, penalties imposed, suspensions, revocations, and foodborne illness investigations?
10. Why must the ordinance be approved now if applications will not begin until January 2027?
11. Why not first resolve the current problems involving informal food sales and unpermitted operations before opening a new program?
12. When will the County meet directly with our Alliance to hear from the licensed businesses that will be affected?

13. If the County believes additional staffing is necessary for a pilot program consisting of only 66 MEHKO permits, how does it justify its position that it currently has sufficient capacity to supervise approximately 1,800 restaurants, 550 mobile food permits, and the informal operations that have already been reported?

Thank you for your time and attention to these concerns. We respectfully request that the County pause final approval until it presents the public with a complete, transparent, funded, coordinated, and genuinely enforceable plan. Before opening another regulatory pathway, the County must demonstrate that it can control the current problems already affecting licensed businesses, consumers, and the community.

Sincerely,

Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno

On Thu, Jul 9, 2026 at 8:28 AM Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov> wrote:

Good Morning,

Pulling responses together that address your questions from the July 4th email.

- Who will enforce it.
The Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division will be the primary enforcement agency for the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation program (MEHKO.) Public nuisance complaints will be handled by local city and county code enforcement offices.
- How enforcement will be funded.
Enforcement will be funded by permit fees and any applicable penalty fees issued due to noncompliance.
- Whether sufficient personnel exist.
Environmental Health (EH) was recently allocated 5 additional Environmental Health Specialist

Positions. Recruitments for these positions will go out this fiscal year. In addition, 3 existing vacant positions were filled on July 6th and all 3 staff were assigned to the consumer protection unit where the MEHKO program will be housed. The MEHKO program will not begin accepting applications until January 2027 and the division believes this will be adequate time to train staff in the program.

- How complaints will be handled.

Complaints will be handled using the existing EH process for facilities. A complaint inspection will be performed and reinspection will be conducted if necessary.

- What consequences will apply.

Reinspections performed will be charged the current reinspection fee and penalties will be assessed for non compliance. The proposed ordinance has penalties/fees that are applicable to property owners thus increasing the ability for enforcement.

- How existing licensed businesses will be protected

Environmental Health's mission is to protect the public's health through education, timely inspections, and engagement with the community and this will continue if the MEHKO program is adopted in Fresno County.

- Whether the program creates unacceptable public-health or economic risks

The MEHKO program will be a 2 year pilot program with a limited number of permits issued per city and unincorporated areas (66 total.) The ordinance was developed to include additional requirements to accompany State regulations that will help mitigate many the concerns regarding food safety and risk. Fresno County's local ordinance includes guardrails that balances providing a new pathway for small businesses with clear enforcement authority to address noncompliant operations and operators. In addition, the Department will monitor for foodborne illnesses trends and consistent with current practice conduct investigations if there are multiple foodborne illness cases indicating a single food source, event, and/or location.

From: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, July 08, 2026 5:43 PM

To: District 1 <District1@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 2 <District2@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 3

<District3@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 4 <District4@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 5 <District5@fresnocountyca.gov>; Clerk/BOS <ClerkBOS@fresnocountyca.gov>; Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov>; membership@calrest.org; Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>; sacramento_do@sba.gov; bsinghallen@clia.org; Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>

Subject: Fwd: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Dear Clerk of the Board, Chairman Bredefeld, Vice Chairman Chávez, Members of the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office, County Counsel, Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division, and California Restaurant Association:

On behalf of the Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno, we are following up on the formal correspondence submitted approximately four days ago regarding the proposed MEHKO pilot ordinance scheduled for second reading and final consideration on July 14, 2026.

As of today, we have not received a substantive written response to the concerns, requests, and documentation previously submitted by the Alliance.

This is deeply concerning because the July 14 hearing is approaching quickly, and the issues raised by licensed food businesses remain unanswered.

Our prior correspondence requested, among other things:

A written MEHKO implementation and enforcement plan.

Identification of the department, administrator, and responsible officials accountable for permitting, inspections, complaint response, enforcement, suspensions, revocations, and coordination with cities.

A written status report regarding complaints, photographs, reports, and evidence submitted by the Alliance since approximately October 2025.

A staffing and resource assessment showing whether the County has sufficient inspectors, evening and weekend coverage, vehicles, funding, and complaint-response capacity.

An independent economic-impact analysis addressing the effect of the proposed pilot on licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, commercial kitchens, employees, and other regulated food businesses.

A public-health and safety assessment addressing foodborne illness, allergens, refrigeration, temperature control, potable water, wastewater, traceability, inspection access, and repeat violations.

A formal advisory committee that includes licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, MEHKO operators, Environmental Health, Code Enforcement, County administration, cities, and public-health representatives.

Public reporting of applications, permits, inspections, complaints, violations, corrective actions, suspensions, revocations, repeat violations, unresolved cases, and complaint-response times.

The Alliance is not asking for special treatment. We are asking for equal enforcement, transparency, accountability, and meaningful participation before a new food-business category is implemented.

The statewide MEHKO data shows that creating permits does not automatically eliminate unpermitted home-based food sales. The same statewide review identified hundreds of complaints involving unpermitted home-based food vendors. This is why Fresno County must have a designated implementation and enforcement team before applications are accepted or permits are issued.

If Fresno County is not prepared with staffing, procedures, inspection capacity, complaint-response timelines, allergen review, public reporting, and real consequences, then the responsible course of action is to continue the item until those safeguards are ready.

We also request the economic study or analysis used to determine that 66 MEHKO permits will benefit Fresno County without disproportionately harming existing licensed food businesses that already pay for permits, inspections, commissary services, insurance, taxes, approved equipment, refrigeration, potable water systems, wastewater disposal, payroll, rent, and other compliance costs.

Licensed businesses need answers to these questions before final approval:

Who will be responsible for implementation and enforcement?

What department will respond to complaints?

How quickly will complaints be investigated?

Will inspections occur during nights and weekends?

How will unpermitted home-based food operations be addressed?

How will the County verify meal limits, sales limits, sanitation, water, wastewater, and food safety compliance?

How will allergens such as peanut-based sauces be reviewed and controlled?

How will existing licensed food businesses be represented during implementation?

What data will be reported publicly during the pilot?

Who will be accountable if permits are issued without adequate safeguards?

Because these questions remain unanswered, the Alliance respectfully renews its request that the Board continue or postpone the July 14 second reading until the County provides written responses, publishes an implementation and enforcement plan, and gives licensed food businesses a meaningful opportunity to review and comment.

We respectfully request written confirmation that:

1. The Alliance's prior correspondence was received.
2. The prior correspondence was distributed to all five Board members.
3. The prior correspondence was included in the official administrative record.
4. This follow-up correspondence will also be included in the official administrative record for the July 14, 2026 meeting.
5. The County will provide a substantive written response before the July 14 hearing or continue the item until such response is provided.

Please provide confirmation as soon as possible due to the approaching hearing date.

Respectfully,

Jorge Granados
President
Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno** <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 6, 2026 at 3:13 PM
Subject: Re: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN
To: Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>

Gracias Lucio No es de mucha importancia antes del 14 de julio para la nueva ordenanza del programa de mehko quedamos en espera

On Mon, Jul 6, 2026 at 10:01 AM Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov> wrote:

Thank you Jorge. El supervisor ha estado muy ocupado con reuniones y conferencias fuera de la ciudad, pero le he enviado el correo electrónico en el que solicitabas reunirte con él, y también le enviaré este correo.

Lucio Avila | Board Member Assistant
Office of Supervisor Luis Chavez
2281 Tulare St., Fresno, CA 93724



Main Office: (559) 600-3000 Direct: (559) 600-3002

Providing excellent public services to our diverse community

From: Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, July 4, 2026 5:19 AM

To: District 1 <District1@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 2 <District2@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 3 <District3@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 4 <District4@fresnocountyca.gov>; District 5 <District5@fresnocountyca.gov>

Cc: Clerk/BOS <ClerkBOS@fresnocountyca.gov>; Prado, Joe <jprado@fresnocountyca.gov>; membership@calrest.org; Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno <alliancelicensedfoodvendors@gmail.com>; sacramento_do@sba.gov; bsinghallen@clia.org; Avila, Lucio <lavila@fresnocountyca.gov>

Subject: URGENT REQUEST TO CONTINUE THE JULY 14 MEHKO SECOND READING AND PROVIDE A WRITTEN ENFORCEMENT PLAN

Dear Chairman Bredefeld, Vice Chairman Chávez, Members of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office, Department of Public Health, Clerk of the Board, and California Restaurant Association:

On behalf of the **Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno**, we respectfully submit this formal request for immediate administrative and legislative action before the scheduled July 14, 2026 second reading and final consideration of the proposed Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations, or MEHKO, pilot ordinance.

The Alliance represents licensed food trucks, restaurants, caterers, mobile food facilities, and other regulated food businesses that have invested substantial financial resources, labor, personal savings, and years of effort to comply with applicable public-health, safety, taxation, employment, and business requirements.

Licensed food businesses are required to pay for permits, inspections, insurance, taxes, certified equipment, refrigeration, potable water systems, waste disposal, commercial facilities, payroll, rent, workers' compensation, maintenance, and numerous other operating expenses. After satisfying these obligations, licensed businesses should not also be required to repeatedly petition the County to enforce the same public-health and food-safety laws against unpermitted operations.

I. Repeated Requests for Assistance

Since approximately October 2025, the Alliance has repeatedly and patiently requested the following:

- Enforcement against unpermitted food operations.
- Responses to complaints, reports, photographs, and other evidence submitted by Alliance members.
- Field inspections during the hours in which unlawful food sales are occurring.
- Identification of the department and officials responsible for enforcement.
- A meaningful meeting with County representatives.
- Written information regarding staffing, available resources, enforcement procedures, response times, and measurable results.

During a meeting with County representatives, Alliance members were informed that field operations directed at unpermitted food vending had not been conducted for approximately two years.

The Alliance has also received information indicating that the County may not currently have sufficient staffing or resources to fully address the unpermitted food operations already occurring throughout the County.

This creates a fundamental administrative concern:

If the County does not presently possess sufficient personnel, funding, or operational capacity to enforce existing law, how can it responsibly approve and administer a new program that will require additional permitting, inspections, complaint investigations, reporting, education, enforcement, compliance review, and follow-up?

II. Lack of Meaningful Stakeholder Participation

The proposed ordinance is proceeding toward final approval without licensed restaurants, food trucks, caterers, mobile food facilities, and other regulated businesses having received a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the enforcement and implementation framework.

The Alliance requested a meeting with Supervisor Luis Chávez before the second hearing. As of the date of this correspondence, the Alliance has not received a definite meeting date or a substantive written response, despite the approaching final hearing.

Licensed food businesses should not be excluded from a policy process that directly affects:

- Public health.
- Food safety.

- Fair business competition.
- Inspection standards.
- Tax compliance.
- Consumer protection.
- Enforcement resources.
- Existing jobs.
- The continued viability of established small businesses.

A public process is not meaningful merely because comments are permitted at the end of the decision-making process. Meaningful participation requires a genuine opportunity to review, question, influence, and respond to the enforcement and implementation plan before final adoption.

III. Public-Health and Consumer-Safety Concerns

Food-safety requirements are not merely administrative formalities. They exist to prevent illness, hospitalization, allergic reactions, contamination, and death.

The relevant risks include:

- Unsafe handling of meat and other potentially hazardous foods.
- Lack of adequate refrigeration.
- Improper hot- and cold-holding temperatures.
- Lack of potable water.
- Inadequate handwashing facilities.
- Cross-contamination.
- Improper sewage or wastewater disposal.
- Undeclared allergens, including peanuts.
- Lack of traceability when a consumer becomes ill.
- Difficulty identifying, locating, entering, or inspecting an operation conducted inside a private residence.
- Inadequate response to repeat violations.

The Alliance is not asserting that every home kitchen or informal food vendor causes illness. Rather, the Alliance is asserting that reduced inspection frequency, inconsistent enforcement, insufficient staffing, and unclear accountability remove safeguards that licensed businesses are required to maintain every day.

Any regulatory framework that creates different safety, inspection, and compliance standards for businesses selling similar food products must be supported by a clear, evidence-based explanation demonstrating how the public will remain adequately protected.

IV. Economic Disparity and Lack of Regulatory Parity

Restaurants and permitted mobile food facilities may be subject to multiple inspections, substantial equipment expenses, rent, insurance, taxation, payroll, workers' compensation, commercial kitchen requirements, vehicle or facility maintenance, and other continuing compliance obligations.

Under the proposed system, MEHKO operators may be subject to a materially different regulatory, inspection, and cost structure.

That distinction raises a serious issue of economic and regulatory parity.

It is inequitable for one category of food business to bear the full cost of compliance while another category competes in the same market with lower operating expenses, fewer inspections, different facility requirements, and potentially reduced enforcement exposure.

The smallest licensed businesses are often the most severely affected. They pay to operate, pay to comply, and pay taxes that fund County government. They must then devote additional time and resources to asking the same government to perform enforcement responsibilities for which it is already funded.

A lawful pathway for new entrepreneurs should not be created by shifting the economic disadvantage onto businesses that have already complied with the law.

implementation.

V. Formal Requests for Board and Administrative Action

The Alliance respectfully requests that the Board and County administration take the following actions:

1. **Continue or postpone the July 14, 2026 second reading and final vote** until licensed food businesses have received a meaningful stakeholder meeting and written responses to the concerns raised.
2. Require County staff to prepare and publish a **written enforcement and implementation plan** before final adoption.
3. Identify the specific department, administrator, and position responsible for:
 - Permitting.
 - Inspections.
 - Complaint intake and response.
 - Field enforcement.
 - Tax compliance.
 - Repeat violations.
 - Suspensions and revocations.
 - Program reporting.
 - Coordination with cities and other agencies.
4. Provide a written status report regarding complaints, evidence, and reports submitted by the Alliance since October 2025.
5. State when regular field enforcement against unpermitted food operations will resume.
6. Provide a written staffing and resource assessment identifying:
 - The number of currently available inspectors.
 - Evening and weekend coverage.
 - Vehicles and equipment.

- Complaint-response capacity.
- Current vacancies.
- Funding available for the pilot.
- Additional personnel required.
- Anticipated workload created by the proposed program.

7. Require an independent economic-impact analysis addressing the effects on:

- Licensed restaurants.
- Licensed food trucks.
- Caterers.
- Commercial kitchens.
- Employees.
- Property owners.
- Other regulated food businesses.

8. Require a public-health and safety assessment addressing:

- Foodborne illness.
- Allergens.
- Refrigeration.
- Temperature control.
- Potable water.
- Wastewater and sewage.
- Waste disposal.
- Fire safety.
- Consumer complaints.
- Traceability.
- Inspection access to private residences.

9. Establish a formal advisory committee that includes representatives from:

- Licensed restaurants.
- Licensed food trucks.
- Caterers.
- MEHKO operators.
- Environmental Health.
- Code Enforcement.
- County administration.
- Participating cities.
- Consumer or public-health representatives.

10. Require public quarterly reporting that identifies:

- Number of applications.
- Number of permits issued.
- Number of inspections.
- Number of unannounced inspections.

- Number and type of complaints received.
- Violations documented.
- Corrective actions ordered.
- Suspensions or revocations.
- Repeat violations.
- Unresolved cases.
- Average complaint-response times.

11. Include a formal six-month review and a procedure allowing the County to suspend, modify, or terminate the pilot if staffing, inspection, enforcement, economic, or public-health objectives are not being met.

VI. Accountability and Administrative Capacity

The Alliance has raised these concerns respectfully and patiently for months.

At this stage, the Alliance is no longer requesting only additional discussion, informal assurances, or future consideration. The Alliance is requesting:

- Written answers.
- Identified responsible officials.
- Specific actions.
- Enforceable deadlines.
- Field enforcement.
- Transparent reporting.
- Measurable results.

If a department lacks sufficient personnel, funding, vehicles, legal authority, or operational capacity, County leadership should disclose that deficiency and provide the resources necessary to perform the required work.

If an administrator, department, or office is unable or unwilling to carry out its assigned responsibilities, those responsibilities should be reassigned to an official or department possessing the authority, competence, resources, and capacity to perform them.

This request is not personal in nature. It is a request for basic governmental accountability, administrative competence, and equal enforcement of the law.

VII. Request for Inclusion in the Official Record

The Alliance respectfully requests that the Clerk of the Board:

- Include this correspondence in the official public record for the July 14, 2026 Board of Supervisors meeting.
- Distribute this correspondence to all five members of the Board.
- Include it with all materials related to the proposed MEHKO ordinance.
- Confirm receipt in writing.

- Provide the agenda item number once the agenda is published.
- Preserve this correspondence as part of the legislative and administrative record concerning the proposed pilot program.

The Alliance further requests a substantive written response from the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrative Office, and the Department of Public Health before the July 14 hearing.

VIII. Conclusion

The Alliance is not opposed to entrepreneurship, lawful opportunity, or the development of new small businesses.

The Alliance is opposed to approving a program without adequate staffing, meaningful industry participation, economic analysis, clear enforcement authority, transparent accountability, and equal protection for businesses that already comply with the law.

The Board should not approve the program first and determine later:

- Who will enforce it.
- How enforcement will be funded.
- Whether sufficient personnel exist.
- How complaints will be handled.
- What consequences will apply.
- How existing licensed businesses will be protected.
- Whether the program creates unacceptable public-health or economic risks.

Public health, consumer safety, fair competition, administrative accountability, and the survival of licensed small businesses require careful planning before final approval.

For these reasons, the Alliance respectfully requests that the July 14, 2026 second reading be continued until the County provides the requested information, meetings, safeguards, and written implementation plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Jorge Granados

President

Alliance Licensed Food Vendors of Fresno