

May 15, 2025 Testimony before

## **Vermont House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry**

**Re: H. 401 - An act relating to exemptions for food manufacturing establishments**

Good morning, Chair Durfee and members of the committee. Thank you for considering my testimony and for accommodating my tight schedule. For the record, my name is **Allan Reetz, and I work as Director of Public & Government Affairs at Hanover Co-op Food Stores**. Across our three retail locations (White River Junction, VT, Lebanon and Hanover, NH), we purchase \$19 million in local food each year from within a 100-mile radius—65% of that comes from Vermont producers.

### **We support H.401 as passed by the Senate**

At our Co-op, we've watched many local favorites get their start in home kitchens—earning trust at farmers markets, growing gradually, and eventually landing on retail shelves. It's a well-worn path for successful food entrepreneurs in stores like ours, Hunger Mountain Food Co-op, and up the road at Adamant Food Co-op. At cooperatives and independent retailers around the state, we depend on local goods to satisfy customers and member-owners.

That's why the sales threshold matters. It creates the breathing room small producers need to test, grow, and refine their offerings before taking on licensing costs. Raising the threshold to \$30,000 allows producers to stay focused on quality and community connection.

We are especially grateful that the Senate decided for the inclusion of Vermont's small producers of pickled and fermented foods.

Food manufacturing establishments take a variety of forms and are where business innovation is alive and well. And they create more than just delicious, healthful products. They produce income streams that can keep a farm afloat, make local food more accessible, and help rural economies thrive.

Thank you for supporting all categories of early-stage producers so they can grow beyond the start-up phase. Whether or not they choose to move beyond selling at a local farmers market, your balanced legislative approach is giving them a fair shot to succeed.

We would be excited to see H.401 pass into law this year.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Reetz

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