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March 14, 2026

Senate Labor & Commerce Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

**RE: Senate Bill 226 – An Act relating to the sale of homemade food**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Alaska Farm Bureau, I am writing to provide our perspective on Senate Bill 226, which proposes amendments to Alaska's homemade food regulations regarding the sale of products in reduced oxygen packaging.

The Alaska Farm Bureau has long appreciated the "cottage food" exemptions that allow our members and neighbor growers to flourish. These regulations have allowed Alaskans to sell non-potentially hazardous goods—such as jams, jellies, and baked goods—at farmers' markets, agricultural fairs, and farms with reduced regulatory hurdles. The recent changes to these rules have allowed many small-scale food businesses to expand by allowing additional products to be sold with minimal regulatory oversight. This flexibility is vital to the economic health of our small-scale agricultural operations and local food systems.

As the Committee evaluates SB 226, we believe it is essential to have a nuanced discussion regarding the balance between easing regulations and maintaining appropriate food safety standards. We recognize the specific concerns raised by this legislation:

- **Addressing High-Risk Methods:** The bill aims to separate high-botulism-risk foods from those currently qualifying for the homemade food exemption.
- **Defining Specific Hazards:** It introduces a formal definition for "reduced oxygen packaging," identifying it as packaging where oxygen is removed to maintain quality or create a vacuum seal.
- **Public Health Awareness:** The proposal highlights that low-acid foods, including certain meats and vegetables preserved in vacuum-sealed environments, can present a significant botulism risk.
- **Protecting Producers:** While we champion the growth of the homemade food industry, we also recognize that even a single botulism case could cause significant economic and legal devastation to a small business.

The Alaska Farm Bureau appreciates the dialogue that SB 226 initiates. It is important to ensure that as our industry grows, we are distinguishing between low-risk products and those that may require Department of Environmental Conservation oversight to ensure the safety of all Alaskans.

We look forward to participating in further discussions to ensure that any regulatory changes continue to support our agricultural community while keeping our food supply safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Murgage". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Scott Murgage, President  
Alaska Farm Bureau