



## **Public Testimony in Support of Small Business Policy Reforms**

### **Lowering Catering License Fees & Establishing a Simplified Consumer Packaged Goods Permit**

February 19, 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Alders,

My name is Dr. Laquita Joyner-McGraw, and I serve as the Executive Director of Youth Entrepreneurs (YE), a Connecticut-based nonprofit organization dedicated to preparing middle and high school students for economic mobility through entrepreneurship education, financial literacy, and career readiness programming.

I am writing in strong support of the proposed policies to (1) lower the catering license fee and (2) develop a simplified consumer packaged goods (CPG) permit process in the City of New Haven. Through our work with youth and emerging entrepreneurs across Greater New Haven, we regularly see the structural barriers that prevent aspiring business owners from formally launching their ventures. High licensing fees and complex permitting processes disproportionately impact first-time founders, food-based startups, and entrepreneurs from historically under-resourced communities.

Entrepreneurship is not only a pathway to business ownership — it is a workforce development strategy. When young people and small-scale founders are able to navigate regulatory systems effectively, they develop critical competencies in financial management, compliance, marketing, and operations. However, when entry costs are too high or processes are unclear, many potential entrepreneurs delay formalization or abandon their efforts altogether. Lowering the catering license fee reduces financial strain at a crucial early stage of business formation. Establishing a streamlined CPG permit process increases clarity and access for small food producers who want to operate legally and responsibly within the city. These policies promote economic inclusion while maintaining regulatory standards.

From an ecosystem perspective, reducing barriers to entry strengthens local business development, increases tax participation through formalization, and supports neighborhood-level economic vitality. Policies that are transparent, efficient, and financially



accessible create a more competitive and equitable entrepreneurial environment. Youth Entrepreneurs supports initiatives that responsibly modernize local systems in ways that expand opportunity while preserving accountability. These proposed reforms represent a thoughtful step toward making New Haven a city where innovation and small business growth are accessible to all.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to strengthening New Haven's small business community.

Respectfully submitted,

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