



CITY OF NEW HAVEN BOARD OF ALDERS

165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510-2010
(203) 946-6483

January 5, 2026

Hon. Tyisha Walker-Myers
President, New Haven Board of Alders
165 Church Street
City of New Haven, CT 06510

Dear President Walker-Myers,

We respectfully submit the attached Order for your consideration, requesting approval for the Board of Alders to hold a public workshop on the Catering License Fee and a “First Year Free” policy to support New Haven food businesses and early-stage entrepreneurs.

As the Alders for the 9th and 14th Wards, we have spoken with many of New Haven's small business owners and food entrepreneurs. Through constituent support, technical assistance, and community engagement — including hosting recent Entrepreneur Roundtables — we have consistently heard that New Haven's current catering license cost poses a significant barrier to entry for emerging caterers, microbusinesses, and early market testing.

Currently, New Haven's catering license fee is \$650 in the first year and \$550 in subsequent years — which is significantly higher than many other municipalities. The high fee is burdensome and discouraging for many early-stage entrepreneurs, and may also lead to some entrepreneurs to engage in informal operations. While the revenue line is modest compared with the City's overall permits and licensing receipts, it represents a substantial upfront expense for new businesses operating on thin margins.

The proposed workshop would provide the opportunity to hear directly from impacted businesses, review comparative municipal practices, and evaluate an implementation pathway for a First Year Free program that would waive the first-year catering license fee and establish a reduced renewal fee thereafter. This workshop will also allow the Board to consider fiscal, administrative, and public health compliance in a transparent public setting, with departmental participation.

Thank you for considering this communication.

Hon. Caroline Tanbee Smith
Alder, Ward 9

Hon. Sarah Miller
Alder, Ward 14

