Commercial kitchen license rules impede local food innovation

**Funk's Grove trio cannot use the family's commercial kitchen for their new business**

In 2017 Katie Funk, Jeff Hake, and Jonny Funk started Funks Grove Heritage Fruits & Grains, a 9 acre farm adjacent to Funks Grove Sirup Shop. They began experimenting right away to create the products they had dreamed about-- jams, flour, fruit leather, and more. Using the commercial kitchen at the Sirup Shop seemed like a no-brainer. To make sure they were on the up-and-up with all their health and safety regulations though, they contacted their local health department. That's when they learned that while the shop owners had already paid for a license and kitchen inspection for the Sirup Shop, the trio could not legally use their kitchen. As a separate business, they would have to get their own Class B license to use the kitchen, and the same kitchen would have to be inspected again by the same health department. The initial licensing fee for a Class B permit would set them back $598, and the annual renewal fee each year would cost $427 - a stumbling block for their budding small business. They also learned that any guest chefs who were not employees of their business would not legally be permitted to use the kitchen.

The Problem:
- County regulations prevent the cooperative use of commercial kitchen space and are a barrier to the growth and economic viability of small businesses.
- In some counties, a licensed chef or baker cannot legally cook in an inspected commercial kitchen that is not their own. In that case, two businesses using the same kitchen must each pay a licensing fee and the same kitchen will be inspected twice.
- Fees and regulations for shared kitchen usage vary widely between counties, are difficult to navigate, and can be cost prohibitive.

Potential Solution:
Create a new "Shared Kitchen License" and "Shared Kitchen User License." These licenses already exists in the City of Chicago. The "Shared Kitchen License" gives a business the ability to share their kitchen with other users that are not their employees. The "Shared Kitchen User License" costs a smaller fee and enables businesses to use or rent space in a licensed kitchen.

Would a shared kitchen license help you expand your business?
We are seeking other farmers and small food business entrepreneurs and startups who would benefit from consistent, affordable and accessible shared commercial kitchen licenses or other arrangements.

Tell us about your food business dream! Contact: Molly Gleason, Communications Director at (217)-528-1563 and molly@ilstewards.org or visit www.ilstewards.org/sharedkitchen