

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development

Interoffice Memo

To: Michael Colon, President of City Council
From: Kristen Wenrich, Health Director
Date: October 29, 2025
Re: Environmental Health License Fees

We respectfully request City Council's consideration of the attached ordinance revising Article 1113 of the City of Bethlehem Codified Ordinances relating to food code regulations and fees.

To cover Health Bureau costs associated with licensing and inspecting all food establishments operating within the City of Bethlehem, adjustments to the current licensing and inspection fees are necessary. At present, the Health Bureau's expenses associated with food safety licensing and inspections exceed revenue generated from fees for those services. Increasing fees will help us pay for the services we are required by law to provide to food establishments.

As you likely know, the Bethlehem Health Bureau protects public health by licensing and inspecting all food establishments operating within the City of Bethlehem, as required by state and federal laws. This oversight ensures that every location where food is prepared, sold, or served to the public meets health and safety standards.

By the end of 2025, the Health Bureau will have licensed and inspected approximately 576 food facilities, including churches, restaurants, retail food businesses, institutions, and mobile health vendors. In addition, more than 370 temporary food vendors will be licensed by the end of the year. The Health Bureau also reviews plans for all new establishments and those undergoing ownership changes to ensure they meet food safety standards before opening.

The fees charged for licensing and inspections for food establishments are essential to maintaining public health standards, supporting staff time, training, and administrative services, and ensuring compliance with food safety regulations.

The last fee update was in 2014. Since that time, operational costs have increased, and responsibilities have expanded. As a result, current fees no longer cover the Health Bureau's costs for providing the services. The fees are also now significantly lower than those charged by comparable municipalities in the region. The proposed increases will align the Health Bureau's fees with local standards and ensure adequate cost recovery for health licensing and inspection services.

The Health Bureau therefore requests City Council's review and approval of the proposed adjustments to maintain the City's commitment to the highest standards of public health and safety.