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My name is Dr. Casey Braitsch, MD, MPH and I am a pediatric resident at Yale University Children's Hospital. I am here to provide testimony for the CT chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which supports proposed bill 258 banning trans fats from food service establishments by 2008.

The concern over cardiovascular disease has grown concurrent with our knowledge of it. Premature deaths from heart attacks and strokes have become a major focus of preventive medicine as cardiovascular disease has become the number 1 killer of adults over 65 and causes the highest number of deaths over all age groups. It has been estimated to cause over 1.4 million years of potential life lost before the age of 65.

The process of atherosclerosis and plaque deposition, while commonly thought to be a concern only for adults, begins in childhood. Fats consumed by our youngest members of society will affect them for the rest of their lives. True prevention, therefore, can occur only when we address harms to our population across the spectrum of life.

We have already learned that a diet low in cholesterol, saturated fats and high in fiber can protect against atherosclerosis and early death. There remains, however, an element of harm about which the public remains largely ignorant: trans fatty acids. Trans fatty acids used in commercial products are artificially-produced fat solids that, like saturated fats, have been shown in clinical studies to increase total cholesterol and LDL ("bad" cholesterol). In differentiation from saturated fats, however, trans fats have been shown to decrease levels of HDL ("good" cholesterol), thus adding a level of damage to vessels that natural fats do not. Our understanding of the differential impact of trans fats over other fats has begun, and each year we are finding more evidence of their lethality.

Trans fats are hidden in foods eaten frequently by our youth. Cookies, chips, donuts, fast food are daily indulgences by a large part of our population. While manufacturers have been required by the FDA to list the amount of trans fat in their products since 2006, fast food chains have not. Moreover, they are major ingredients in items such as French fries and donuts, such that if both were consumed in one day, 10g of trans fats would be consumed in that day alone.

Major movements have begun to ban trans fats from food manufacturing and restaurants worldwide. Denmark has passed an exemplary piece of legislation banning all but tiny amounts of trans fats in food products. In the United States, cities have taken their own initiatives, such as Tiburon, California and New York, NY. The movement has spread as far as Malaysia.

Our knowledge of the harm of trans fats, the increasing statistics we continue to acquire regarding their lethality, and their continued and silent use in major food items, gives us an ethical imperative to act. Banning trans fats from food products will lift the burden of negative health effects and silent damage from consumers and their children.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, CT chapter would also like to state its support of bill 686, requiring chain restaurants to post nutritional facts. That bill is a corollary to this one and will give the power of decision to consumers that have been eating, and giving their children, food that is much more harmful than it seems.