



**Public Health Committee  
March 6, 2009  
American Cancer Society Testimony**

**SB 1080 – An Act Concerning Access To Health And  
Nutritional Information In Restaurants.**

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, distinguished members of the committee, good morning. My name is Connie Malave-Branyan and I am the Area Director for Health Initiatives for the American Cancer Society. We stand in strong support of **SB 1080 – An Act Concerning Access To Health And Nutritional Information In Restaurants.**

Americans are increasingly relying on restaurants to feed themselves and their families. In 1970, Americans spent just 26% of their food dollars on restaurant meals and other foods prepared outside their homes. Today, we spend almost half (46%) of our food dollars on away-from-home foods. American adults and children consume about one third of their calories from restaurants and other food-service establishments. Nearly three-quarters of total restaurant visits are at fast food and other chain restaurants, and major restaurant chains account for roughly half of total restaurant visits.

Fast food has found its way into US schools, and even pervades US hospitals. According to a 2006 survey, 42% of 234 academic-affiliated hospitals had brand name fast-food establishments on their campuses. This reliance on away-from-home food has important ramifications because most individuals significantly underestimate the caloric content of restaurant food, especially for higher-caloric foods.

The American Cancer Society believes that people need access to nutritional information to make informed choices about their diets. This information is already required on nearly all packaged foods, which encompasses most foods purchased at supermarkets and convenience stores. Food sold at restaurants is not incorporated into this requirement. However, people are eating at restaurants more frequently than they have in the past. SB 1080 addresses this trend and expands access to nutritional information by requiring restaurants with 10 or more outlets in the state to include caloric and allergen information on menus and order boards. Without this information, people can only guess about a food's nutritional content. Those guesses are often incorrect. Compounded over time, choices based on incorrect assumptions can have dire health consequences.

The American Cancer Society has nutrition, physical activity, and cancer prevention guidelines that recommend maintaining a healthful weight throughout life and consuming a healthful diet. Successful adherence to the guidelines requires informed decision-making. Informed decision-making requires access to nutritional information.

Nutritional information has been required on packaged foods since 1994. Three-quarters of adults report using these food labels, which is associated with eating a more healthful diet. Almost half of consumers report that the nutrition information on food labels has caused them to change their minds about buying a food product.

The Food and Drug Administration recommends that restaurants provide nutrition information that is easy to find and use at the point of decision-making. Half of the largest chain restaurants already collect nutritional information. However, much of the time it is posted on a website or is available on a tray liner after an order has already been placed and is not available when the diner is making his/her choice.

The American Cancer Society is a strong supporter of SB 1080 because we know that one in three cancer deaths are related to poor diet, obesity, and physical inactivity. People cannot begin to address their personal health without tools to make healthy decisions. SB 1080 ensures that they have the basic information necessary to making healthy choices when they eat out.

Thank You.

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