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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Children's Committee
March 5, 2013

Testimony In Favor of
HB 6527 AAC Genetically Engineered Baby Food

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

The Sierra Club feels that the intentional and knowing introduction of toxics into our environment is very much an environmental issue.

The accumulated evidence indicates that GMO engineered foods may pose a significant health threat. Rigorous scientific studies are not available on either humans or animals because the manufacturers of GMO seeds, which are patented, steadfastly refuse to release them for study.

This bill is not about restricting the sale of GMO foods. It is not about agricultural practices, either in Connecticut or nationwide. It is not about disadvantaging our farmers. It is only about giving consumers here the ability, if they so choose, to limit their children's exposure to foods containing GMOs. To do this, they must be able to know what is in food offered for retail purchase. The labeling requirements this bill imposes do exactly that, and only that.

I often hear that GMO labeling should be a federal, nationwide, requirement. And, in theory, I agree. However, we all know about the gridlock in Washington. Until that is resolved, there is virtually no chance of action at the federal level. So, for now, we look to the states. We are working with colleagues in 37 states to pass a state level GMO labeling requirement. As of today, we know of 56 GMO labeling bills introduced in 24 states, including the 3 in Connecticut. We hope that passage of these bills across the country will act as an incentive for the federal government to establish an appropriate and effective national standard, but we have no optimism this will happen soon. So for now we look to the state legislature to protect our children.

It is uncontested that parents must take responsibility for the health and safety of their growing children. This is not possible without the ability to know what is in their food they are bringing home.

The Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club voted this winter to make GMO labeling a priority issue for our 2013 agenda. We strongly endorse this bill and praise the committee for raising it.