

February 28, 2013

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CT HB 6527, An Act Concerning
Genetically Engineered Baby Food

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My name is Tara Cook-Littman. I am a former NYC Prosecutor and one of the leaders of the Grass Roots Movement, GMO Free CT, that has come together to demand our right to know what is in our food. I am above all else, a mother of three children under the age of ten. Last week I testified at the information hearing for HB 6527 in Fairfield, where I spoke about why, as a mother, I am passionate about having the right to choose for myself what to feed my children. But, today I want to speak from the perspective of a lawyer about why we cannot rely on our federal government to mandate GE labeling and why, even if a lawsuit is brought challenging the constitutionality of a state mandated GE Labeling bill, the law would be upheld as constitutional.

First of all, despite what many Americans may believe, genetically engineered foods have never been proven safe by the FDA. Our government has failed to protect us. In fact, GMOs were exempt from testing because they were deemed generally recognized as safe (GRAS), many would say illegally. GE foods never met either of the criteria required to be granted GRAS status. Even the FDA's own scientists believed that GMOs could pose potential harm to human health and warned their superiors that GMOs required additional testing before ending up on our dinner plates. Secondly, it is clear that there will be no action from our federal government at this time because the industry that benefits from the sale of GMOs, has too much power in Washington. States should not wait for the Federal government to act, but rather must protect its' citizens today. In addition, Connecticut is working with thirty seven (37) other states to pass unified GE labeling laws throughout the country. Connecticut will not stand alone.

It has been suggested that state mandated GE labeling laws are unconstitutional, when in fact, there have been no such rulings. One of the arguments from those that oppose GMO labeling is that state

mandated labeling would violate the First Amendment by infringing on the merchants' commercial free speech rights. In plain English, the industry that benefits from the sale of GMOs, thinks their right to keep us in the dark about what we are eating, so they can continue to profit, trumps our right to know what we are feeding our families. Do the legislators of the Constitution State actually believe that the framers intended the First Amendment to afford corporations such protections? To the contrary, our framers intent in writing the constitution was to protect the American citizenry from the very abuses of power evidenced in the lack of transparent labeling of our food. As long as the Connecticut legislature can show that the GE labeling law is reasonably related to numerous legitimate state interests, including health of its' citizens and protecting the environment, the law would be upheld as constitutional.

My Children are past the stage of baby food and baby formula, but, for the sake of all those mothers wanting to make the best choices for their own children, and for the sake of all those children, please mandate the labeling of all baby food and baby formula containing GMOs.

Thank you.