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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CT HB 6519**, An Act Concerning the Labeling of Genetically Engineered Food

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My name is Tara Cook-Littman and I am most importantly a mother of three young children, I am a former NYC Prosecutor, and I represent the CT Right To Know GMO Coalition. We have come together to demand our right to know what is in our food. Such a simple request - the right to know what is in our food so we can choose whether or not to feed our families GMOs. A right the citizens of 62 other countries, including all of Europe, Japan, China, New Zealand and Australia already enjoy. But not here in America where we are shopping totally blind.

The GMO labeling movement began when a group of dedicated mothers, fathers, grandparents, farmers, and health professionals joined together in common purpose to educate their friends and neighbors about GMOs and the need for transparent labeling. Today the CT Right To Know GMO coalition has over 175 members, including organizations, restaurants, farms, and businesses all standing together to ask you, our legislators, to support our right to know. As I reflect back on this past year I am filled with gratitude for all the dedicated advocates fighting for our food freedom and for the knowledgeable, supportive legislators we are so fortunate to have here in CT.

Today you will hear from top international scientists, business owners, farmers, chefs, parents, and health care professionals. By the end of today, all your questions will be answered and the myths spread by the opposition to GMO labeling will be dispelled.

It has been suggested that state mandated GMO labeling laws are unconstitutional, when in fact, there have been no such definitive 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 GMO 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. Whether HB 6519 will survive a

constitutional attack, is really up to all of you. What is your intent in supporting HB 6519? Please be sure to put your intent on the record.

While the jury may still be out as to whether we can say definitively that GMOs are harming us, I have read enough studies that raise serious doubts in my mind as to whether GMOs should be consumed by anyone. And remember, GMOs were NEVER proven safe by our own Government. Before anyone asks us to prove they are dangerous, go ask our own government to prove they are safe and they will not be able to provide you with one government funded long term study proving they are safe. 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.

*"GRAS" is an acronym for the phrase Generally Recognized As Safe. Under sections 201(s) and 409 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (the Act), any substance that is intentionally added to food is a food additive, that is subject to premarket review and approval by FDA, unless the substance is generally recognized, among qualified experts, as having been adequately shown to be safe under the conditions of its intended use, or unless the use of the substance is otherwise excluded from the definition of a food additive.*

*Under sections 201(s) and 409 of the Act, and FDA's implementing regulations in 21 CFR 170.3 and 21 CFR 170.30, the use of a food substance may be GRAS either through scientific procedures or, for a substance used in food before 1958, through experience based on common use in food.*

*Under 21 CFR 170.30(b), general recognition of safety through scientific procedures requires the same quantity and quality of scientific evidence as is required to obtain approval of the substance as a food additive and ordinarily is based upon published studies, which may be corroborated by unpublished studies and other data and information.*

*Under 21 CFR 170.30(c) and 170.3(f), general recognition of safety through experience based on common use in foods requires a substantial history of consumption for food use by a significant number of consumers.*

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. 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.

CT is a member of the Coalition of States for GMO Labeling, a national movement of the grass roots campaigns across this country that is 37 states strong and growing. CT will not stand alone. In CT, we gain momentum and strength every day as more CT residents learn what GMOs are and become angered at how they have been kept in the dark. Do CT legislators want to be remembered as heroes who put the rights of it's citizens above corporate interests or as the legislators who allowed corporate interests to squash our right to know? The answer is yet to be seen, but either way rest assured, we will remember. No corporation has a right to decide what is best for my three beautiful children. I am their mother and I am responsible for doing what is best for them - please give me the tools to make that choice and support HB 6519.

Thank you