

CALANDRELLI HB6519 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE LABELING OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and the Public Health Committee, My name is John D. Calandrelli and I live in Enfield CT.

To get right to the point, I want to know what's in my food! Everything from Aspartame to zinc is now on the food label as it should be. If we're ever to get in better health we must know what's going in our bodies. Yes, we are what we eat. Although some may disagree, I'm thrilled with the demise of the twinkie. But there is one thing about our food which is still a mystery and like the food my mother saved until it went bad and was unrecognizable, I refuse to eat (and buy) anything I can't indentify.

Many people like to say "America is #1!" But in labeling of GMO ingredients we're not even #63! 62 countries have established either mandatory GMO labeling or outright bans. The following states have various campaigns about legislatively requiring GMO labeling: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Ohio, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont (just passed 1st cmte 3/5), Virginia, and Washington.

It's ironic the U.S. spends more per patient on "health care" than all other western nations and yet we have more of most diseases than most if not all those other western nations. Like many people I eat as healthy as I can afford to but it's certainly not easy. I eat organic when I can find it and when I can afford it, which is most of the time. However, there is one area of eating I would rather do without but can't because it is a mystery when buying food....GMO (genetically modified organism) ingredients.

GE (genetically engineered) food is the largest example of a philosophy in place for the last few centuries....that we humans are somehow separate from nature. We take nature apart and study it in fragments. We try to gain control over that fragment and think we have the answer. But many are finally realizing nature doesn't work that way. Nature is holistic; each part connected to every other part.

While genetically engineered foods appeared to have great promise when they were first developed, none of the promises of increased yields, drought tolerance, enhanced nutrition, or other benefit have panned out. Instead we find ourselves consuming foods grown with historically unheard of levels of herbicides, and are faced with the prospect of foods developed with genes from other species, creating potential allergic reactions in those who are sensitive.

In addition to the environmental risks associated with GMOs such as the creation of herbicide-resistant "superweeds", we are also faced with human health consequences. "Moreover, the proprietary mixtures available on the market could cause cell damage and even death [at the] residual levels" found on herbicide-treated crops, such as soybeans, alfalfa and corn, or lawns and gardens. The research team suspects that this popular herbicide might cause pregnancy problems by interfering with hormone production, possibly leading to abnormal fetal development, low birth weights or miscarriages. Health consequences definitely need more study. But these have been difficult as the companies holding the patents on the seeds have not been willing to release them for research purposes.

Mandatory labeling will allow those consumers with specific allergies or intolerances to identify and steer clear of food products that cause them problems. Surveys indicate that a majority of Americans support mandatory labeling.

Sincerely, John D. Calandrelli Enfield, CT