

When I was growing up, we didn't have laws that regulated the need to wear seat belts or bike helmets but we do now because it was demonstrated that these measures would positively direct health outcomes in the event of an accident.

Now, there are also warnings now on toys regarding the possibility of choking and also plastic coverings from the dry cleaners that could cause suffocation so therefore children should not be allowed to play with them.

It is obvious that we are a society that is concerned with the protection and health of our children.

How is it that food – the nourishment needed to contribute to growth and development of little people (children) and set them up for their future health, does not require or need labeling to clearly indicate what the contents include?

Unfortunately, there is a severe lack of scientific studies regarding the direct health impact of GMO's and efforts have been strongly blocked to do such research and have the results made public. This testimony is not to speak to the health impacts of GMO's as there isn't enough direct, clear information in this area to fully assess the effects. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest a direct correlation on increased health issues such as IBS, Crohn's disease, ADD/ADHD, behavioral issues, etc. as a result of GMO's in the food supply.

However, I do feel strongly that we, as American citizens, have the right to know what our food supply is made of and I have the right to choose for myself what to purchase based on the ingredients and contents. Isn't it our responsibility to help insure the health of our children the best we can? I look at the containers of pesticide similar to what is used in GMO seeds and there is an extensive list of warnings and precautions when using these products. I see how workers are protected when they are spraying them on crops. Would someone just open a baby bottle and pour a similar product to directly feed an infant? Of course we wouldn't do that except that we do indirectly each time we are feeding an infant a product that contains these ingredients.

Two of the things we all needed to survive when we came into this world were food and water. An abundance of consumers are now choosing to use more natural and organic foods for themselves and their children. Having baby food and infant formula labeled to identify GMO's will give consumers a choice on how to best care for their families.

I strongly urge you to support HB #6798 and have baby food and infant formula that contain genetically engineered organisms labeled as such. This will help to protect the health of our children and our future.

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Addendum to testimony for HB 6798

Yesterday, February 24, 2015, I had the privilege to address the committee regarding HB 6798. I had previously submitted a written testimony and then presented my testimony orally as well. As this was my first experience with this process, and in hindsight, I had some additional thoughts that I would like to respectfully submit. At the close of the hearing, Co-Chairs Senator Bartolomeo and Representative Urban did encourage and welcome additional communication with the committee so I therefore submit this additional statement.

My initial testimony revolved around laws or changes that were created out of need to protect children as a result of accidents or injuries, sometimes death, that brought about these changes or warnings. After being able to listen to the testimony during the day and with some additional thought, it occurred to me that HB 6798 is purely about the labeling of baby food and infant formula with genetically engineered organisms - not the efficacy or safety of GMO's in the products. I felt the facts of the conversation had gotten mixed together and the true topic of the bill distracted.

The truth is there aren't any long term scientific studies as to the health effects of GMO's or the continued exposure to the substances. And again, this bill is not about the efficacy or safety of such substances or the ability of them "to feed the world". I am not even suggesting that GMO's don't have value to add to our society. Right now, there just isn't enough credible, independent information to make such decisions.

HB 6798 is simply to inform and educate the consumer about a product containing or being exposed to GMO's and therefore providing a consumer with a right to choose on their own behalf.

Having GMO listed on the label doesn't make GMO's or substances "good" or "bad" - it just is.

As a health coach, I teach people how to read food labels in order to make good choices for themselves. Sometimes, we will look at calories, sodium, carbohydrates, cholesterol, etc. and I usually inform them that if the ingredient is hard to pronounce, then it should probably not be consumed. Food labels also indicate where a product is manufactured (perhaps a consumer is interested in the carbon footprint of the product) and now also include warnings about possible exposures to allergens such as peanuts. Food labels are in place to educate and inform a consumer so that they may make a choice on their own behalf and of their own free will.

American food manufacturers produce products here for export to European countries and those products are clearly labeled as having GMO's when they do. It is hard to explain when people ask why that is able to occur and why we don't have that same right. In fact, I often do not have an explanation.

Dietary theories are constantly changing and government agencies established to protect our interests change their mind regularly. We were told to not drink coffee but now learn that 2 cups of coffee/day may have some value. We shouldn't eat fat so an entire food category of low fat was created – now fat is back and valuable in the diet. Drink water but not too much. Cholesterol was to be avoided and now recently that has shifted as well and the public is told not to worry about that any longer. In fact, even cigarettes were distributed by the government at one time but now there is a direct correlation to cancer. Who knows -maybe one day, it may even be discovered that there is a health benefit to tobacco and the public will once again be encouraged to consume tobacco.

This can all be crazy making!! And many of the people I meet and work with confirm this. It is just too hard to know what to believe when it comes to nutrition and diet.

The bottom line is about choice. If you are going on vacation and want to look and feel better in a bathing suit, you might make different choices when it comes to your food and diet. Salad vs. pizza perhaps. If one wants to improve their health, there are certain lifestyle choices to make there as well.

While we don't know the long-term health effects of GMO's in the food, in the meantime, don't we as **American consumers have the right to transparency in the food** (particularly the food that is given to developing infants and children) and get to choose for our self? Why should we, the American public – in particular the newborns and infants, become the "guinea pigs" in this grand experiment and have to make such regulations after the fact too many negative effects are demonstrated?

If there is no harm with GMO's as the manufacturers would like us to believe, then why is there such resistance to having it listed on a label? Again, this is common practice in Europe. As my original testimony stated, the list of warnings is extensive on these products. AND, again, this bill is not about placing a warning on a food product – just a clear statement that the ingredients were exposed to or produced from GMO's.

I strongly believe that it is our right as Americans living in a democracy to make choices for our self with ALL the information provided.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my additional thoughts. In conclusion, I urge you to read food labels for yourself and make good choices for yourself and your family.

I also urge you to continue to support HB6798 so that the residents of Connecticut have that ability as well.

Thank you.

*** I do apologize if this submission does not follow proper protocol but as I've not been involved in this process before, I'm not familiar with such protocol. I just felt it important to voice my opinion as a concerned citizen.