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## **COMMITTEE ON CHILDRENS TESTIMONY**

**By Stan Sorkin, President**

**Connecticut Food Association**

**February 24, 2015**

### **TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB No. 6798: AN ACT REQUIRING THE LABELING OF BABY FOOD AND INFANT FORMULA CONTAINING GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ORGANISMS**

The Connecticut Food Association is the state trade association that conducts programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations on behalf of its 240 member companies—food retailers, wholesalers, distributors, and service providers in the state of Connecticut. CFA’s members in Connecticut operate approximately 300 retail food stores and 135 pharmacies. Their combined estimated annual sales volume of \$5.7 billion represents 75% of all retail food store sales in Connecticut. CFA’s retail membership is composed of independent supermarkets, regional firms, and large multi-store chains employing over 30,000 associates. Our goal is to create a growth oriented economic climate that makes Connecticut more competitive with surrounding states.

**I am Stan Sorkin, President of the Connecticut Food Association. The Connecticut Food Association (CFA) is opposed to HB No. 6798: An act requiring the labeling of baby food and infant formula containing genetically engineered organisms.**

The Connecticut Food Association has testified in favor of labeling of food products on a national basis.

We believe that it is unnecessary public policy to separate baby foods and formula from the existing Connecticut “trigger” law on the books that requires the labeling of products containing GMO’s when specified regional population and number of states approve similar legislation.

Manufacturers and distributors would be forced to carry double inventory to satisfy the wording of a law that only affects 1% of the nation’s population. This “CT only” bill would lead to higher retail prices on baby food and formula that would affect those who can least afford it.

The recently enacted GMO labeling law in Vermont is undergoing legal challenge in the Second Circuit Court. Connecticut should not pass further GMO legislation until a decision has been made on the merits of this challenge. Why put manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and consumers through the expense of implementing this legislation only to find it was ruled invalid by the courts? The costs to implement, control, and maintain the requirements of a CT specific law would be passed on to consumers.

The bill caters to misconceptions that baby formula, a product that must meet vigorous safety testing, is unsafe and thus, may lead to parents making poor decisions regarding the nutrition of their children. Just think about the recent measles outbreak due to the lack of vaccination based on the misconception of the safety of vaccines.

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Individuals who make a personal decision not to consume baby food containing GMO's can easily avoid such products. In Connecticut, as well as throughout the United States, they can purchase products that are certified as organic under the USDA National Organic Program. They can also buy products which companies have voluntarily labeled as non-GMO.

Has the effect of this bill on the WIC program been studied? WIC participants are the core consumers of baby food and formula in CT. The higher cost of CT specific labeled baby foods and formula would increase the cost of these items to the WIC program and have a negative effect on that program's budget. In addition, by law, CT WIC vendors must have these products on hand at all times or else the vendor will lose their WIC license. Will stores be forced to remove authorized WIC products from the shelves if not labeled and deprive WIC participants of required nutrition?

**For the above reasons, we respectfully ask that the Committee does not act on HB No. 6798**