



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Committee on Public Health
March 18, 2015

Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA
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Senate Bill # 1000 (RAISED) An Act Concerning Food-Borne Illness.

The Department of Public Health supports the intent of Senate Bill 1000. However, the Department recommends that the title of this raised bill be changed to "An Act Concerning Foodborne Outbreaks," and that the following substitute language be used to change the bill's focus from "cases" to "outbreaks":

"Section 1. (Effective from passage) (a) There is established a task force to study outbreaks of food-borne illness originating from a public eating place, as defined in section 22-127 of the general statutes. The task force shall consider the type of information that is communicated to members of the public after an outbreak of food-borne illness is confirmed and the manner of such communication."

In Connecticut, a "foodborne outbreak" is an "illness in two or more individuals acquired through the ingestion of common-source food or water contaminated with chemicals, infectious agents or their toxic products. Foodborne outbreaks include, but are not limited to, illness due to heavy metal intoxications, staphylococcal food poisoning, botulism, salmonellosis, shigellosis, Clostridium perfringens intoxication and hepatitis."¹

Foodborne outbreaks and potential foodborne outbreaks are "reportable diseases" under Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-215. A "reportable disease" is a communicable disease, disease outbreak or other condition of public health significance that must be reported to the Department². The Commissioner's reportable disease list specifically includes foodborne outbreaks³.

Based on estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year roughly 1 in 6 Connecticut residents (or 555,600 people) get sick, 1,480 are hospitalized, and 35 die of foodborne diseases. The source of illness for the vast majority of these persons is unknown. In 2004-2012, 146 foodborne outbreaks were reported in Connecticut, involving an estimated

¹ Conn. Agencies Regs. § 19a-36-A1(p)

² Conn. Agencies Regs. § 19a-36-A1(dd)

³ See Connecticut Epidemiologist, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jan. 2015)

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2,147 illnesses (mean 14 cases/outbreak). Overall, suspected food item(s) were identified in 104 (67%) outbreaks through statistical evidence, compelling supportive information, and/or identification of the pathogen in the food item. The most common settings for outbreaks were food service establishments (FSE) [100 (64%)] and private homes [38 (24%)]. Overall, 92 (59%) outbreaks were associated with contamination or mishandling of foods at FSE, and 32 (21%) with commercially distributed contaminated food items.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's view on this bill.