

H.B. No. 6975 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Anderson

The significance of a moment for a child with food allergies and his/her family is overwhelming.

One moment your child is eating something that is labeled to be free of his/her allergens. The next moment (a matter of seconds for my son) your child is having an anaphylactic reaction - hives, throat swelling, trouble breathing, repeated vomit. It's later determined that the manufacturer mislabeled the product.

One moment you are in a meeting at work. A moment later you receive a call that your child is being transported to the hospital after suffering an allergic reaction.

One moment your child is included in what everyone else in the classroom is doing. A moment later he/she is excluded in some fashion as the activity involves one of his/her allergens (ie lunch, birthday/holiday celebrations, or a lesson involving food).

One moment your child is having an allergic reaction. A moment later, the care taker recognizes the signs of anaphylaxis and appropriately administers epinephrine. That is the moment that saves his/her life.

In just a moment the situation can change drastically for a child suffering from food allergies. If immediate intervention is not received, symptoms could get worse and, lead to a moment that is thought of in a nightmare daily by parents of food allergic children.

My son is currently 4.5 years old and has life threatening allergies to 8 different foods. In his short lifespan, despite my extreme level of vigilance, he has had approximately 5 anaphylactic episodes - requiring epinephrine and medical care at the hospital. He has also had numerous other reactions mitigated by Benadryl.

Every day presents challenges to those who suffer from or those who love someone with food allergies. As parents, educators, bus drivers, law makers, school nurses, all those that have the possibility to influence a child's day while at, or on their way to school, we should do so. I would ask that the committee involve parents of kids with food allergies, FARE, medical specialists, and all others whose opinion could be beneficial to setting a uniform set of rules to be applied to CT schools to ensure the safe and equal learning environment to those children with food allergies.

Thank you for your careful attention to this issue of importance that affects 1 in 13 children.