

Legislation Text

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Urging the Pennsylvania delegation to the United States Senate to oppose any attempt to limit the ability of States to require labeling of GMO foods.

WHEREAS, Residents of Philadelphia have the right to know whether the foods they purchase were produced with genetic engineering so they can make informed purchasing decisions. Labeling is necessary to ensure that consumers are fully and reliably informed about the products they purchase and consume; and

WHEREAS, Consumers overwhelmingly favor knowing whether the food they purchase and consume is produced with genetic engineering for a variety of reasons including health, economic, environmental, religious and ethical reasons. Polls consistently show that the vast majority of the public, more than 90%, wants to know if its food was produced with genetic engineering; and

WHEREAS, There is currently no federal requirement that genetically engineered (GMO) foods be labeled. In contrast, over 60 countries, including Japan, South Korea, China, Australia, Russia, Malaysia, the European Union member states and other key U.S. trading partners, already have laws mandating the disclosure of GMO ingredients on food labels. In 2011, Codex Alimentarius, the food standards organization of the United Nations, stated that governments are free to decide on whether and how to label foods produced with genetic engineering; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not require or conduct safety studies of GMO foods. Instead, any safety consultations are voluntary, and GMO food developers may decide what information to provide to the agency. Market approval of genetically engineered food is based on industry research alone. There have been no long-term or epidemiological studies in the U.S. that examine the safety of human consumption of genetically engineered foods; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory identification of foods produced with genetic engineering can provide a method for detecting the potential health effects of consuming such foods; and

WHEREAS, Without mandatory disclosure, consumers of GE foods may unknowingly violate their dietary and religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, Foods identified as non-GMO constitute the fastest growing market segment in agriculture. However, only a small portion of the food industry participates in voluntary labeling of foods claimed not to be the product of genetic engineering. There are no consistent standards for such labeling or for enforcement of voluntary labels. Because of this, voluntary labels are insufficient to provide consumers with adequate information on whether or not the food they are purchasing was produced with genetic engineering; and

WHEREAS, Because neither the FDA nor the U.S. Congress requires the labeling of food produced with genetic engineering, in order to serve the interests of their citizens some states, including Connecticut, Maine and Vermont, have passed laws to require GMO labeling in their states. Vermont's law is set to go into effect in July 2016. Other states, including Pennsylvania, have considered similar legislation in recent legislative

sessions and more states will likely pass GMO labeling bills in the future to respond to public demand for this labeling; and

WHEREAS, On July 23, 2015, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the “Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015,” a bill that would preempt state governments from requiring labeling of GMO foods; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we do hereby urge the Pennsylvania delegation to the United States Senate to oppose any attempt to limit the ability of States to require labeling of GMO foods.