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FAVORABLE With Amendment HB1421 (SB 911) - Labeling synthetic food

Good Afternoon Chair and Committee Members,

I am Emily Tarsell, a licensed therapist and President of Health Choice Maryland. We ask for a favorable vote, particularly for mandatory labeling of synthetic food.

Precision fermentation, or synthetic biology, is a clever food-technology whereby organisms like bacteria are gene edited to produce artificial fats and proteins for making artificial foods that some call Frankinfoods. These include synthetic milk, synthetic dairy products and synthetic meats. Independent testing of some of these products found that they lacked many important micronutrients and vitamins found in the natural product. They also found a host of compounds that could be harmful to humans including foreign DNA.[1]

The FDA would not require these foods to be tested or labeled. Other countries like Italy have banned the sale of synthetically produced meat. Such countries require that fake foods be tested for safety before they're put on the market, but not the U.S. [2] Labeling here is non-existent or misleading and designed to deceive the unwary consumer.

This is a new technology with unknown consequences in terms of health, safety, social and environmental impact. It is an investor model driven by the duty is to make profit for its shareholders, not driven by the public good. The food industry is known for deceptive and discriminatory food labeling practices.

Other states have set precedent for food safety. The antibiotics in food law that began in California and the GMO food labeling law that began in Vermont were both later adopted as national policy because of their public health implications. [4,5] Scholars implore more states to take such initiatives to enact food safety regulations of their own. They say that states need to fill in the gaps in the current patchwork of US food regulations and serve as laboratories for developing new rules and standards.

Maryland should set the standard for the nation to ensure the proper labeling of synthetic foods because we the consumers have a right to know. **Please vote Favorable with Amendment for HB 1421**
Thank you.

Emily Tarsell, LCPC

[1] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/errolschweizer/2022/03/02/what-should-consumers-be-asking-about-precision-fermentation/?sh=c64073727b02>

[2] https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/bored-cow-synthetic-milk-protein-unknown-compounds/?utm_source=luminate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=defender&utm_id=20231218

[3] https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/lab-grown-fake-chicken-heavy-metals-rodent-dna-cola/?utm_source=luminate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=defender&utm_id=20240110

[4] <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/259273-california-antibiotics-law-is-national-policy/>

[5] <https://www.downeybrand.com/publications/gmo-labeling-coming-soon-to-california-and-the-rest-of-the-country/>