

Dear Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Dr. Marsha Blakeslee and I've been in private practice in Severna Park, Maryland, having practiced medicine for just over 30 years. In the course of caring for patients, I deal with a large variety of health conditions and provide counsel on the best way to care for those conditions. Perhaps more importantly, is the ability to provide medical counsel that helps to prevent the development of chronic health conditions.

A huge body of evidence points to the ability to avoid many health conditions by reducing exposures and consumptions that lead to chronic health disorders. There is great evidence that many human medical disorders are the result of what we eat and drink. This includes high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and cancers. Knowledge of the contents of products allows consumers the ability to make appropriate choices for their health.

We are in an age of rapid advancement of genetic technologies, using and altering DNA and RNA. While many biotechnological advancements may hold promise for the future, there is also the possibility of great harm. History is littered with the removal from the market of many products which were ultimately found to be dangerous. Clinical practice has taught me that susceptibility to harm is different for every person, since each person's physical, biochemical, and genetic make-up is different. Consuming any food product or animal that contains or has been treated with any new technology that has the capacity to modify the gene structure or function of an individual could result in disastrous health outcomes for some.

For basic human safety, any product of this type must be openly labeled as such, and the labeling should include potential risks to the consumer. We all expect to know the calorie count, carb count, fat grams, gluten or nut content of any product that we consume. We should certainly expect labeling on our foods that may contain products that could have unknown short and long-term potential risks. I would strongly advise that you pass SB911 to provide appropriate labeling of products for the people of the state of Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dr. Marsha Y. Blakeslee