

March 5, 2024

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am writing in support of HB1421 as a mother, daughter, and informed consumer, as I hold a Bachelor's degree in Chemical engineering and a Master's in Food science, and I have worked in the food industry as a product development specialist. My need for extensive research on food was due to not only my professional background but also because of my mother's Parkinson's condition and my son's allergies as a child. Had I known about the correlation between the health of the gut microbiome and brain health sooner, I would have saved years of agony for my deceased mother and all the ones around her who loved her and tried to help her. In addition, I would have avoided years of trying different treatments for my son. Food had a crucial part in my son's healing and my mother's quality of life. I cannot imagine the repercussions an artificial gene-modifying food product could have on my son's health and could have had on my mother's health at the time. My son's and mother's experiences are not anecdotal since most of the adult and young population suffers chronic illnesses.

Dr. John Fagan's analysis of food-like products developed using modern technologies based on synthetic biology is very revealing. Dr. Fagan analyzed a milk-like product that is currently commercialized as a food product, and he identified 92 different compounds, which are not present in regular milk. According to Dr. Fagan, most of these compounds are so uncommon that they have never been classified in science nor assigned a name. Dr. Fagan found them to be predominant in this milk-like product that is currently being commercialized in spite of containing compounds that have not been part of the human diet before. These are very frightening facts. I ponder with great concern the effect of these types of food-like products, which are being commercialized as foods and consumed in different quantities and frequencies by a predominantly susceptible consumer population.

Food is our daily sustenance, our source of nutrition and nourishment. It plays such an essential role in our lives. We are honored to have model organic regenerative and biodynamic farms in Maryland, which exemplify what it means to provide food products that have a positive impact on the consumer, the community and the environment. People have the right to know and decide what they and their families consume. Today, you have the opportunity to protect this right, contribute to the development of a healthier food market defined by informed consumers, and avoid preventable harm to the public.

Sincerely,

Alejandra Lorenzo-Chang