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(FAV)

Hello my name is Skye Cushing, I am a junior at Wootton High School in Montgomery County. I have been allergic to eggs, fish and nuts my entire life. Because of this eating at a restaurant is very difficult for me, as I have to play a game of telephone with the server, kitchen, and chef just to find out what options on the menu are safe for me to eat. Even after this time-consuming process, I can still be left with uncertainty or misinformation, causing me to have an allergic reaction. For example, a few months ago I was at my friend's birthday brunch and after about a 15 minute process of trying to find something on the menu I could eat, I was assured the breakfast burrito was safe for me. When the burrito was brought to my table I took a bite, and an allergic reaction quickly set in. My throat and mouth became itchy and I had an unbearable stomach ache making it so that I had to leave. Because of this miscommunication, I had to miss out on celebrating my friend's birthday. I am not alone in this frustrating issue. Over 600,000¹ people in Maryland have food allergies, making it unsafe and difficult for them to dine out as well. The implementation of house bill 181, will eliminate the game of telephone and allow everyone in Maryland with allergies, including myself to make safe and informed choices about what they eat at restaurants. I am in strong support of HB 181.

¹ FARE. *Estimated Food Allergy Population by State and Age Group*. FARE, 2023, FoodAllergy.org state-level data.