



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

February 22, 2016

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Senate
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Markey and Senator Warren:

Thank you for your leadership in supporting mandatory GMO food labeling that would allow consumers to decide for themselves if they want to seek out or avoid GMOs in the food they purchase.

As cosponsors of Massachusetts House bill 3242, which would require mandatory labeling of foods containing genetically modified organisms (GMO) in Massachusetts, we urge you to strongly oppose any federal legislation that would undermine our efforts to require GMO labeling.

As you know, In July 2015, the U.S. House passed H.R. 1599, which would permanently prevent states and the federal government from requiring mandatory GMO labeling on food products. While a companion bill has not been introduced in the Senate, we understand that certain Senators and lobbyists for certain food and biotechnology interests are promoting a variety of legislative proposals to prevent states from adopting GMO labeling laws and nullify Vermont's existing law, which was passed in 2014 and goes into effect in July 2016.

H.3242, Massachusetts' GMO labeling bill, enjoys broad and bipartisan support from three quarters of the Massachusetts Legislature. The bill currently has 155 co-sponsors, 127 in the House and 28 in the Senate. The bill is backed by a large coalition of consumer, environmental, farming, business, and community organizations.

Nationally, more than 90% of Americans support GMO labeling because they demand transparency in their food purchasing. Given such strong support and years of federal inaction, states such as Massachusetts have begun to exercise their constitutional authority to require mandatory GMO labeling.¹ H.R. 1599 and similar proposals are designed to undermine our state-level efforts to provide consumers with the transparency they demand and deserve.

Legislation to undermine state GMO labeling efforts should be rejected by the Senate, because:

¹ In 2014, Vermont became the first state to require mandatory GMO labeling. Connecticut and Maine have also passed GMO labeling laws that will go into effect once neighboring states pass similar laws.

Americans overwhelmingly want the right to know if there are GMO ingredients in their food. National polls by Consumer Reports and the New York Times show that over 90% of consumers support labeling of GMO foods. Support is consistent across all regions of the country. Public support for labeling GMOs is also bipartisan. A poll by the Mellman Group found 93% of Democrats and 86% of Republicans and Independents are in favor of labeling.

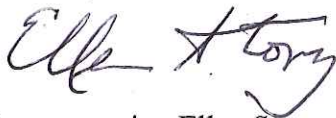
The U.S. lags behind 64 other countries -- including the European Union, Australia, Japan, China, Russia and India -- that already require GMO labeling. The very same companies that are lobbying you to prevent GMO labeling in every single state in the U.S. are already exporting products to foreign markets where GMO food labels are the law of the land. Moreover, industry itself is divided. Campbell Soup Company recently announced that it will voluntarily label all its products nationwide, and it expects the cost to be negligible. Many other responsible companies are willing to label their products, so that consumers can choose the foods they want for themselves.

GMO crops have vastly increased application of a risky herbicide. Expanding the use of GMO crops has increased annual applications of the herbicide glyphosate from 16 million pounds to more than 280 million pounds. In January 2015, the chemical (commercial name: Roundup) was named as a probable human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

Labeling has a negligible impact on food costs. According to a report commissioned by Consumers Union, the advocacy arm of Consumer Reports, the median cost to consumers of requiring labeling of GMOs is \$2.30 per person annually, or less than a penny per day. In Europe, where labeling has been in effect since 2002, there has been no measurable impact on food prices. In January, Campbell Soup Company announced that it supports mandatory GMO food labeling, and that it will label all its products nationally to comply with the Vermont GMO labeling law, without raising prices.

For all these reasons, we urge you to strongly oppose any proposals to undermine state GMO labeling efforts. Such legislation would directly affect Massachusetts residents, our constituents, who overwhelmingly support GMO food labeling, and would block the legislation we have carefully developed to respond to their needs and preferences. It would inappropriately interfere with a state's ability to address the concerns of its citizens. The only national GMO labeling solution that would meet consumer needs is one that includes strong, mandatory, easy-to-understand GMO labeling requirements like those set to take effect in Vermont in July 2016. Other federal bills to preempt state GMO labeling laws would continue to keep Massachusetts consumers in the dark, and we urge you to work diligently to defeat them.

Sincerely,



Representative Ellen Story, 3rd Hampshire
and on behalf of my colleagues listed on the next page, who agreed to co-sponsor this letter:

Senator Michael Barrett, 3rd Middlesex
Senator Cynthia Stone Creem, 1st Middlesex and Norfolk
Senator Kenneth Donnelly, 4th Middlesex
Senator James Eldridge, Middlesex and Worcester
Senator Ryan Fattman, Worcester and Norfolk
Senator Patricia Jehlen, 2nd Middlesex
Senator Jason Lewis, 5th Middlesex
Senator Barbara L'Italien, 2nd Essex and Middlesex
Senator Joan Lovely, 2nd Essex Senate
Senator Mark Montigny, 2nd Bristol and Plymouth
Representative Brian Ashe, 2nd Hampden
Representative Antonio Cabral, 13th Bristol
Representative Marjorie Decker, 25th Middlesex
Representative Lori Ehrlich, 8th Essex
Representative Jonathan Hecht, 29th Middlesex
Representative Jay Kaufman, 15th Middlesex
Representative Peter Kocot, 1st Hampshire
Representative Timothy Madden, Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket
Representative Elizabeth Malia, 11th Suffolk
Representative Joseph McKenna, 18th Worcester
Representative James O'Day, 14th Worcester
Representative Denise Provost, 27th Middlesex
Representative Angelo Puppolo, 12th Hampden
Representative Frank Smizik, 15th Norfolk
Representative Todd Smola, 1st Hampden
Representative Timothy Toomey, 26th Middlesex
Representative Aaron Vega, 5th Hampden
Representative Chris Walsh, 6th Middlesex

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions