

Myths and Facts about California AB 418

Myth: Existing regulation is sufficient to protect California consumers. The federal government has an active, comprehensive food safety process that reviews food additives and provides significant scientific oversight.

Fact: The FDA is not required to reexamine approved additives even after new evidence is presented about their dangers. The last time some of the chemicals were assessed was almost 50 years ago. Recent studies have highlighted the health risks posed by these dangerous chemicals.

Myth: State systems have thoroughly reviewed these chemicals, and existing California laws are sufficient because they require removing chemicals from foods and checking alternatives if those food additives are unsafe.

Fact: There are no California laws that have approved or restricted the use of these chemicals in food. There is also no state law requiring companies to find alternatives for unsafe chemicals. To the contrary, state actions support the passage of AB 418.

Myth: Current regulations are sufficient in part because health advocates submitted a petition to CDPH to require warning labels on foods containing synthetic dyes.

Fact: Efforts by public interest groups to improve food additive safety indicate that the status quo is not working. OEHHA found that synthetic food dyes are linked to neurobehavioral effects in children, yet artificial colors are still widely used in confectionaries and other processed foods marketed to children. The petition is an example of gaps in the law that require proactive efforts to address.

Myth: Several substances this bill proposes to ban are subject to active petitions to these government entities initiated by many organizations supporting this measure.

Fact: The FDA regularly fails to respond to petitions to restrict additives that pose public risks. Plus, these petitions had to be filed by consumer and public health advocates because of a history of FDA's inaction. The petitions are meant to compel the FDA to follow up on decades-old promises that have gone unfulfilled. States cannot rely on the federal system to protect consumers.