



LINDA B. ROSENTHAL  
 Assemblymember 67<sup>th</sup> District

THE ASSEMBLY  
 STATE OF NEW YORK  
 ALBANY

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 Committee on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse

COMMITTEES  
 Agriculture  
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July 22, 2015

Dear Members of the New York State Congressional Delegation:

As cosponsors of New York State Assembly bill A. 617-A, which would require mandatory labeling of genetically engineered (GE) food products in New York State, we urge you to vote against H.R. 1599.

Introduced by Rep. Michael Pompeo (R-KS), this bill would permanently prevent states and the federal government from requiring mandatory GMO (genetically modified organism) labeling on food products.

New York's bill enjoys broad and bipartisan support. The bill currently has 73 and 27 cosponsors in the New York State Assembly and Senate, respectively, and has passed through several committees in both chambers. In addition, the bill is backed by a large, national coalition of consumer, environmental, farming, business and community based organizations. Recently, 43,500 signatures were delivered to the Assembly Speaker and Senate Majority Leader in support of bill A.617.

Nationally, more than 90% of Americans support GMO labeling because they demand transparency in their food purchasing. With growing support for GMO labeling across all sectors of American society and in light of years of inaction on the federal level to label GMOs, states such as New York have begun to exercise their constitutional authority to require mandatory GMO labeling.<sup>1</sup> H.R. 1599 is designed to undermine our state-level efforts to provide consumers with the transparency they demand and deserve.

In addition to preempting states, H.R. 1599 would prohibit states from regulating GMO crops to protect public health and the environment, for example by preventing state's efforts to create buffer zones between fields planted with GMO crops, even if that reform was supported and desired by farmers and consumers in that state. It would also all but eliminate the United States Food and Drug Administration from creating a national mandatory GMO labeling system, and instead would create a *voluntary* labeling standard designed by the biotechnology industry. H.R. 1599 would also allow foods labeled as "natural" foods to contain GMO ingredients – despite the fact that a national Consumer Reports poll found that 60 percent of consumers assume that foods labeled as "natural" do not contain GMOs.

H.R. 1599 should be rejected by Congress, because:

**Americans overwhelmingly want (and deserve) 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. Public support for labeling GMOs is bipartisan with 71% of Democrats and 64% of Republicans in favor of labeling.

**The U.S. lags behind 64 other countries that already require GMO labeling.** The very same companies 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 required by law.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

**GMO crops have increased herbicide applications.** Expanding the use of GMO crops has increased annual applications of glyphosate – a probable human carcinogen – from 16 million pounds to more than 280 million pounds. In January, 2015, the pesticide glyphosate (commercial-name: Round-Up) was named as a probable 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 mandatory GMO labeling is \$2.30 per person per annum, 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.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge you to vote NO on H.R. 1599. This gravely flawed special interest legislation would hurt New Yorkers, our constituents, who overwhelmingly support GMO food labeling, and would directly undermine the legislation we have carefully developed to respond to their needs and preferences. It inappropriately interferes with states' ability to address the concerns of its citizens.

Should you have any questions about this critically important matter, please do not hesitate to reach out for more information. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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Member of Assembly – 67<sup>th</sup> AD  
Chair, Committee on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse

Thomas J. Abinanti  
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Chair, Subcommittee of Regulated Mortgage Lenders

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Chair, Committee on Education

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