

September 14, 2021

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned groups, write to convey our strong endorsement of the Food Labeling Modernization Act (FLMA) (H.R.4917/S.2594). The bill, introduced by Representative Frank Pallone and Senator Richard Blumenthal, along with Representative Rosa DeLauro and Senators Ed Markey and Sheldon Whitehouse, would increase consumer transparency, encourage product reformulation, and counter misleading food claims. We urge you to cosponsor the FLMA to align food labeling policies with advancements in nutrition science and technology.

Food labels can play an important role in promoting healthy eating and preventing diet-related chronic diseases. Yet today's food labels do not provide the simple, straightforward information that consumers need to evaluate products and make healthy choices.

For example, studies show that consumers with less education and lower incomes are less likely to use the complex Nutrition Facts label, demonstrating inequitable access to nutrition information under current labeling policies.¹ To make nutrition information more accessible, the FLMA directs the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to establish a simple, standard front-of-package labeling system for foods sold in the United States. Dozens of countries have implemented similar systems and seen significant public health gains.²

The FLMA also brings food labels into the 21st century by requiring that nutrition, ingredient, and allergen information be available for grocery items sold online. Nearly one-third of Americans regularly buy groceries online,³ but basic product information is not always available.⁴ Updates to align food labeling laws with modern consumer practices are long overdue.

The bill will help counter misleading claims that make foods appear healthier than they truly are. For example, consumers sometimes misjudge the whole grain content of foods with claims like "multigrain" and "honey wheat."⁵ The FLMA would require products using terms like these to also declare what percent of the grains are whole versus refined. This transparency will make it easier for consumers to follow dietary recommendations to make at least half of one's daily grains whole grains.⁶

As one of several other measures that increase transparency, the FLMA requires clearer disclosure of gluten-containing grains. This is a critical step to protect the millions of people in the U.S. with celiac disease, a digestive disorder triggered by gluten.⁷

Please support the health of our nation and consumers' fundamental right to know what is in their food by supporting the Food Labeling Modernization Act!

Sincerely,
Center for Science in the Public Interest
1,000 Days
Allergy & Asthma Network
AllergyStrong
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America
Balanced
Beyond Celiac

Celiac Community Foundation of Northern California
 Celiac Disease Foundation
 Chef Ann Foundation
 Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
 Consumer Federation of America
 Consumer Reports
 CURED Campaign Urging Research for Eosinophilic Diseases
 Eosinophilic Family Coalition
 FARE
 Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Connection Team
 Food Allergy Science Initiative
 Food Equality Initiative
 Gluten Free Watchdog, LLC
 Gluten Intolerance Group
 Hawaii Public Health Institute
 Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy
 LunchAssist
 Maryland Public Health Association
 National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
 National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
 National Celiac Association
 NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
 Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
 Society for the Study of Celiac Disease
 Society of Behavioral Medicine
 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
 The FPIES Foundation
 UConn Rudd Center
 United Fresh Produce Association
 Washington University School of Medicine

¹ Christoph MJ, Larson N, Laska MN, Neumark-Sztainer D. Nutrition Facts: who is using them, what are they using, and how does it relate to dietary intake? *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2018;118(2):217-228.

² World Cancer Research Fund International. Building momentum: lessons on implementing a robust front-of-pack food label. 2019. <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/our-publications/building-momentum-series/lessons-implementing-robust-front-of-pack-food-label/>. Accessed August 2, 2021.

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Bablani L, et al. The impact of voluntary front-of-pack nutrition labelling on packaged food reformulation: a difference-in-differences analysis of the Australasian Health Star Rating scheme. *PLoS Med*. 2020;17(11):e1003427.

³ Shoup ME. Online grocery sales stabilize as market enters new growth cycle with 'large base of committed shoppers.' *Food Navigator*. September 10, 2020. <https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2020/09/10/Online-grocery-sales-stabilize-as-market-enters-new-growth-cycle-with-large-base-of-committed-shoppers>. Accessed May 7, 2021.

⁴ Olzenak K, et al. How online grocery stores support consumer nutrition information needs. *JNEB*. 2020;52(10):952-957.

⁵ Wilde P, Pomeranz JL, Lizewski LJ, & Zhang FF. Confusion about whole grain content and healthfulness in product labels: a discrete choice experiment and comprehension assessment. *Public Health Nutrition*. 2020; 23(18):3324-3331.

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at DietaryGuidelines.gov.

⁷ National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Definition & Facts for Celiac Disease. October 2020. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/celiac-disease/definition-facts>. Accessed May 7, 2021.