October 6, 2025

Testimony of Aviva Musicus
Science Director, Center for Science in the Public Interest
Hearing on Massachusetts H3959

Dear Chair Decker, Vice Chair Kerans, Chair Driscoll, and Vice Chair Cyr:

My name is Aviva Musicus, and I am a Massachusetts resident and the Science Director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). CSPI is an independent, science-based nonprofit that has worked for more than 50 years to improve the food system and advocate for consumer health. We urge you to report House Bill 3959 favorably. This bill would:

1. Prohibit the sale of foods containing potassium bromate and propylparaben in Massachusetts.
2. Prohibit synthetic dyes in foods and beverages sold or provided on public school grounds.

Potassium bromate and propylparaben are linked to cancer and reproductive harm. Potassium bromate, a flour bleaching agent, was identified as a carcinogen by the World Health Organization in 1992.[1] Propylparaben, a preservative, was linked to reproductive toxicity by the European Food Safety Authority in 2004.[2] Despite these well-established risks, the FDA has not banned these additives, and states have stepped in to fill the gaps left by federal failure. California banned both chemicals from food in 2023, Arkansas followed in 2025, and similar bills have been introduced in several states, including New York, Connecticut, and Maryland. Massachusetts should not fall behind.

Synthetic food dyes like Red 40 and Yellow 5 can cause or exacerbate neurobehavioral problems like inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and restlessness in some children, according to a systematic review of the evidence, including 27 human clinical trials as well as animal and in vitro evidence, completed in 2021 by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.[3] These dyes offer no nutritional benefit. They are marketing tools to make food more visually appealing. Safer alternatives exist and are widely used in the European Union, where warning labels are required for products with certain synthetic dyes. California banned

[1] World Health Organization. *Evaluation of Certain Food Additives and Naturally Occurring Toxicants.* WHO Technical Report Series. 1992;828. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241208287.
[2] European Food Safety Authority. *Opinion of the Scientific Panel on food additives, flavourings, processing aids and materials in contact with food (AFC) related to para hydroxybenzoates (E 214-219).* EFSA Journal. 2004;2(9), 83, 1-26. https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2004.83.
[3] Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, California Environmental Protection Agency. *Health Effects Assessment: Potential Neurobehavioral Effects of Synthetic Food Dyes in Children*. April 16, 2021. Available: https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/risk-assessment/report/healthefftsassess041621.pdf.

synthetic dyes in school foods in 2024, and six states followed in 2025. Massachusetts should advance this legislation to protect children's health and ability to learn.

This action is especially urgent because many children rely on school meals for their daily nutrition, so it is critical that Massachusetts ensures those foods are as safe as possible. In the 2023-2024 school year, Massachusetts public schools served over 45 million breakfasts and 95 million lunches.[4]

House Bill 3959 offers Massachusetts a chance to protect children and families from unnecessary and harmful food chemicals. We urge the Committee to report this bill favorably to ensure safer, healthier food for every resident of the commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Aviva Musicus
Center for Science in the Public Interest

[4] Hayes, C. & FitzSimons, C. *The Reach of School Breakfast and Lunch During the 2023-2024 School Year.* Food Research & Action Center. April 2025. https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/Reach-Report-2025.pdf. Accessed October 2, 2025.