

Legislative Committee on Children

Public Hearing on Toxins Effecting Children

Thursday February 28th

6pm – 9pm

Fairfield University

Barone Campus Center

Oak Room

Testimony by Doug Sutherland

Chairwoman Bartolomeo and Chairwoman Urban, distinguished members of the committee, I want to thank you for bringing this public hearing to us down in Fairfield County and for giving me an opportunity to speak on an issue that should be near and dear to the hearts of all of us: the safety of our children.

My name is Doug Sutherland. I live in Trumbull. I'm a member of the Trumbull DTC and a member of Democracy for America – Fairfield County and I'm also the co-producer of the DFA Public Access TV show, Stream of Conscience. I'm also an engineer by trade. I mention these things as a way of saying that I consider myself fairly active in the community and fairly well read when it comes to public policy issues affecting our state, our environment and our families. However, the issue of Genetically Modified Organisms in our food supply had largely flown under my radar until a friend of mine called me up a few months ago.

After discussing this issue with my friend, I began to do some research on the topic of GMOs. And what I found greatly concerned and dismayed me. I had a general idea what a GMO was, but I had no idea how prevalent they had become in our food supply and how casually they had been approved by the federal agency which is supposed to be charged with protecting that food supply – the FDA. What I discovered was another case of corporate power seemingly trumping good public policy and quite frankly good common sense. I was also stunned to discover that not only had GMOs infiltrated as much as 70% of the food we eat, but that this had been going on for the last 25 years with very little notice by the public. I do not think that last point is an accident.

Among the many revelations I had during my research was that many of the currently approved GMOs were not engineered to be more nutritious or more flavorful or more beneficial for the consumers, but that mostly they had been engineered to increase production – primarily by becoming more resistant to pests such as weeds and insects. And the methods that were used to accomplish this goal were to make the crops produce their own toxins or to make them resistant to the application of herbicides applied to kill weeds. Because most of these crops are intended to be consumed by humans or by farm animals that in turn produce food that will be consumed by humans, this entire concept raises many red flags. Are these new toxin producing crops safe for human consumption? Is the ingestion of the herbicides now more liberally applied to these crops safe for human consumption?

Because so much is still unknown about genetics and about the human immune system, it seems obvious that introducing new genetically modified organisms into the nations food supply should be done with great care and with extensive long-term testing and with full disclosure to the public. However, in reading the history of GMOs in our food supply, it seems clear that neither great care nor extensive long-term testing has been done and a lack of full disclosure is an understatement.

Now the GMO issue that is primarily being addressed by H.B. 6527 is one of labeling. I would submit that labeling of food containing a new and potentially hazardous substance is the very least we should be demanding as a step towards protecting the health of consumers, our families and our children. That this bill deals with the labeling of infant formula and baby food makes it all the more important. I would strongly urge the members of this committee to bring this bill forward with a strong recommendation that the full House and Senate pass this important legislation and send a strong signal to food manufacturers across the nation that in Connecticut we stand up and defend the health and safety of our children.

Thank you.

Doug Sutherland