

Written Testimony of Zena Richter of Darien, CT,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Select Committee on Children,
February 28, 2013

Testimony in Support of:
RB3794, AN ACT CONCERNING GENETICALLY ENGINEERED BABY FOOD

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and honorable members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Zena Richter. I am a resident of Darien, CT. I write in strong support of RB3794 An Act Concerning Genetically Engineered Baby Food.

I am the mother of three children and the aunt of 11 nieces and nephews. I have always been an advocate for children – a vulnerable group without a voice in government. Adults must educate themselves and be aware of the health concerns we are exposed to daily, where we have little or no control in consumer spending to make a difference. The choices we make today for ourselves and our children directly impact our health, the health of our growing children, and future offspring.

It's frightening to think that millions of mothers unknowingly are feeding their babies infant formula and/or baby food that have been genetically modified and harmful to their long-term health. If mothers knew, through labeling, what "science project" they are feeding to their babies, I believe most would look for a more natural, healthier infant formula and/or baby food that has not been genetically modified. Connecticut needs to be a leader in demonstrating its commitment to children's health.

"Genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, are created when a gene from one species is transferred to another, creating something that would not be found in nature. A large percentage of domestic crops (up to 85% of soybean yields) have DNA that was tweaked in a lab, yet it is nearly impossible to know which food items contain these genetically engineered ingredients."¹

GMOs have not been proven in any way to be safe, and many of the world's countries have banned these items whose DNA has been genetically engineered. In the U.S., they aren't even labeled, much less banned, so the majority of the populace has no idea that they are eating lab-created DNA on a daily basis.

"Many experts on the subject, including Jeffrey Smith of the Institute for Responsible Technology, believe that these foods pose health risks because we don't know the consequences of altering the proteins in the genetic material of food. There are many animal studies that demonstrate health problems from eating genetically modified foods such as increased allergies, reduced fertility, antibiotic resistance, stomach and intestinal bleeding, and even cancer."²

Children are more susceptible to health problems and disease, and they have higher exposure to GMOs. Vyvyan Howard, an expert in infant toxicopathology at Liverpool University Hospital in the U.K. said

¹ Urban, Shilo. "8 Reasons GMOs are Bad for You." Organic Authority. Organic Authority, n.d. Web. 28 Feb. 2013. <http://www.organicauthority.com/foodie-buzz/eight-reasons-gmos-are-bad-for-you.html>

² Genetically Modified Foods and Your Child." Naturally Savvy. Healthy Shopper, 22 May 2009. Web. 28 Feb. 2013. <http://www.naturallysavvy.com/pediatric-nutrition/genetically-modified-foods-and-your-child> (as cited in Smith, Jeffrey M. Genetic Roulette. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007).

“swapping genes between organisms can produce unknown toxic effects and allergies that are most likely to affect children.” Biologist David Schubert warns: “Since children are the most likely to be adversely effected by toxins and other dietary problems, if the GM food is given to them without proper testing, they will be the experimental animals. If there are problems, we will probably never know because the cause will not be traceable and many diseases take a very long time to develop.”³

If you look at infant formulas on the store shelves, soy-based formula is one of the many options. The Enfamil ProSobee infant soy formula lists the 1st ingredient as “Corn Syrup Solids (54%)” (85% of U.S. corn is genetically engineered⁴), the 2nd ingredient as “Vegetable Oil (26%)” - one of those oils is Soy, and the 3rd ingredient is “Soy Protein Isolate (15%)”. In the non-soy formulas, “vegetable oil” is listed as the 3rd ingredient – and soy is one of those vegetable oils.⁵

“[C]hildren are more susceptible to the dangers of genetically modified (GM) foods for several reasons. Firstly, they are still developing and these altered foods may interfere with the developmental process. Secondly, because children are smaller in size and body weight, genetically modified foods may impact them more substantially than they do adults. Thirdly, children may not gain the nutrient levels they would obtain in conventional foods because genetic modification impacts the nutrient status of foods. Lastly, because children are still building their immune systems, they may be in more danger from antibiotic resistance bacterial infections.”⁶

Connecticut must be a leader in demonstrating its commitment to children’s health! Please support this important issue by requiring manufacturers of infant formula and baby food, which contain GMOs, to include clear and conspicuous labeling so mothers can make an informed choice.

I applaud the members of the Committee on Children for raising this important issue and urge you to support RB3794.

Sincerely,

Zena Richter
zenarichter@yahoo.com
203-424-5966
11 Rebel Lane
Darien, CT 06820

³ Excerpted from Jeffrey M. Smith’s *Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods* Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007.

⁴ “Genetically Engineered Crops.” *Center For Food Safety*. Center For Food Safety, n.d. Web. 28 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/campaign/genetically-engineered-food/crops/>>.

⁵ “Enfamil® ProSobee® Nutrients.” *Enfamil*. Mead Johnson & Company, n.d. Web. 28 Feb. 2013. http://www.enfamil.com/app/iwp/enf12/product.do?dm=enf&id=/Consumer_Home3/FeedingSolutions/EnfamilProSobeeLIPIL2&iwpst=B2C&ls=0&csred=1&r=3539513477

⁶ “Genetically Modified Foods and Your Child.” *Naturally Savvy*. Healthy Shopper, 22 May 2009. Web. 28 Feb. 2013. <http://www.naturallysavvy.com/pediatric-nutrition/genetically-modified-foods-and-your-child>