



Testimony

Submitted on behalf of the
Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry

Before the:
Consumer Protection, Technology, & Utilities

Presented by:
Aaron Riggleman
Manager, Government Affairs

House Majority Caucus Room
Harrisburg, PA
May 13th, 2025

417 Walnut Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1902
717.720.5472
pachamber.org

**Chairman Burgos, Chairman Metzgar, and honorable members of the House
Consumer Protection, Technology & Utilities Committee,**

Good morning and thank you for the invitation to testify today. My name is Aaron Riggleman, and I serve as the Manager of Government Affairs for the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry. The PA Chamber is the largest, broad-based business advocacy organization in the Commonwealth, representing employers in every county and in every industry including those operating throughout Pennsylvania's food supply chain.

From food processors to distributors, manufacturers, grocers, and retailers, the food and agriculture industry is a vital part of Pennsylvania's economy. It supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, generates billions of dollars in annual economic activity, and ensures that families in every corner of the Commonwealth have access to safe, affordable, and high-quality food every day.

According to a 2021 economic impact report sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, food manufacturing alone is the largest contributing sector of the state's agriculture industry, generating more than \$22 billion in annual economic output¹. The economic impact is substantial, influencing not only the factory itself but also the transportation, packaging, equipment, and retail industries. In addition, Pennsylvania's food and beverage manufacturing industries use Pennsylvania and American agricultural commodities to produce products enjoyed by consumers in Pennsylvania and around the world.

¹ https://teampa.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TeamPA_Agriculture2020EISUpdate_FINAL-1.pdf

Recent Efforts to Increase Pennsylvania's Competitiveness

For many years, Pennsylvania struggled to establish itself as a business-friendly state. Uncompetitive tax rates, complex regulatory mandates, and slow government responsiveness placed employers at a competitive disadvantage compared to neighboring states, making it harder to attract investment and convince Pennsylvania employers to expand their operations. However, in recent years, meaningful progress has been made. The historic reduction of the state's Corporate Net Income Tax, elimination of the tax on start-ups, and the beginning stages of permitting reform have sent a clear message that Pennsylvania is serious about improving its economic competitiveness. While these are steps in the right direction, it is more important than ever for lawmakers to prioritize public policy that enhances Pennsylvania's competitiveness, and work with employers to ensure important, well-intended proposals can be advanced in a way that does not unintentionally or unduly disrupt business operations and their workforce.

Concerns with State-Specific Food Regulations

It is with this context that I come before you today to share our concerns with proposals to establish state-specific food regulations. I want to be clear: the safety and quality of the products and ingredients offered to consumers is, and always will be, the top priority for our members. The United States operates the safest, most efficient, and affordable food system in the world, administered by the U.S. Food and Drug

Administration, ensuring consistent and transparent labeling and ingredient safety standards nationwide.

Introducing state-specific mandates disrupts this carefully balanced system, forcing businesses to navigate a complicated and potentially conflicting regulatory environment, likely adding significant new compliance costs and logistical challenges. Ultimately, these costs would move down the supply chain, from producers and processors to consumers, driving up the price of everyday grocery items at a time when affordability remains a top concern for Pennsylvanians.

Focus on Federal Standards to Achieve Public Health Goals

While we urge lawmakers to promote public health, we caution against increasing layers of state-specific mandates — particularly those that conflict with or duplicate federal food regulations, which could work against important policy goals by complicating compliance and risking making food less accessible and affordable. As compliance costs rise and supply chain complexities increase, food prices inevitably follow.

Even more problematic, restricting or banning federally approved ingredients and additives could remove safe, affordable products from store shelves without delivering meaningful public health benefits. Food manufacturers already operate under a transparent, nationally consistent framework that gives consumers clear information about ingredients and a growing range of product choices that meet diverse nutritional needs and individual preferences.

Existing Federal Oversight

The FDA, through authority granted by Congress, regulates all food ingredients and additives — including color additives — using a rigorous, science-based process. Every ingredient and additive approved for use in the U.S. must undergo thorough safety evaluations and meet the highest standards before it can be used in products available to consumers. Certified color additives, for example, are subject to ongoing testing and batch certifications to ensure the safety of every shipment.

Ingredient labels already disclose this information clearly to consumers, empowering them to make informed dietary decisions. Meanwhile, food manufacturers continue expanding product lines to provide consumers with more options than ever before. State-specific mandates that duplicate or diverge from this national framework could unintentionally introduce excessive complexity, administrative costs, and regulatory uncertainty that ultimately harm businesses, employees and consumers. Furthermore, requiring unproven and misleading labeling creates a legal conundrum, which is bad for businesses and consumers.

Lastly, the FDA's regulatory system is not rigid – it evolves based on new science and ever-changing food safety information. For example, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, recently directed a review of previously approved ingredients and food additives, and while these directives need more clarity, these actions demonstrate that our unified federal approach serves as the proper avenue for food regulatory changes.

Conclusion

In closing, Pennsylvania consumers, families and our economy are better off operating under a unified federal approach to food safety, rather than a patchwork of state-by-state prohibitions and labeling requirements that will erode public trust, cause confusion for consumers and present major compliance obstacles and challenges, with the greatest burden on small businesses and retailers. While we share this Committee's commitment to promoting public health, ensuring food safety, and providing access to high-quality food, we respectfully believe these objectives are best achieved through a consistent, science-based federal framework and market-driven innovation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.