



July 10, 2015

The Honorable Joseph Pitts  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pitts:

Per your request, below are responses to questions from the Honorable Representative Capps from the hearing on June 4, 2015, entitled Examining HR 2017, the Common Sense Nutrition Disclosure Act of 2015.

**1. In your testimony you point out that people consume many more calories when they eat outside of the home. Can you elaborate on how people might change their choices when they are aware of the calorie content?**

It is hard to make informed choices without information. Some studies have concluded that menu labeling is not working based on small studies that lack enough statistical power to pick up the level of change that can be expected from a public health intervention. However, bigger, better conducted studies are showing some encouraging results on consumer selections and menu reformulation.

- A study conducted in Starbucks restaurants in New York City found that menu labeling led to a six percent decrease in calories on average per transaction. If people make similar changes in other chain restaurants (and about 25% of calories come from chains), that would mean a 30 calorie per person per day decrease population-wide. Keeping in mind that the obesity epidemic is explained by about a 100 calorie per day imbalance, such a change could have a meaningful impact on public health.
- A New York City study found 15 percent of customers reported using menu labeling and purchased 106 fewer calories in a fast-food lunch than customers who did not see or use the calorie information.
- In a restaurant study conducted in Philadelphia, displaying calorie and nutrient labels next to all food-item descriptions and prices resulted in an average purchase of 151 fewer calories, 224 mg less sodium, and 4 g less saturated fat relative to unlabeled sites.

**2. In your testimony you mentioned that Americans spend half of their food dollars on eating outside of the home. Can you also speak to how this has impacted the eating habits of children as well?**

Twenty-five percent of children's calories come from fast-food and other restaurants. This trend is of public health concern because consumption of restaurant food is associated with increased caloric intake and poorer diets.

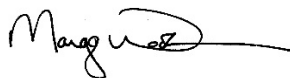
- Most restaurants offer menu items designed for, and marketed to, children. The vast majority of kids' meals include calorie-dense, nutritionally-poor foods and beverages. For example, 86 percent of children's meals at the nation's largest chain restaurants are high in calories; many also are high in sodium (66%) and saturated fat (55%).
- Despite the health risks associated with sugary drink consumption, the majority of top restaurant chains feature soda or other sugary drinks with kids' meals; over three-quarters of the top restaurant chains promote sugary drinks through kids' menus. French fries are the most common kids' meal side option.
- Parents of children 3–6 years old presented with a McDonald's menu with calorie labeling ordered an average of 100 fewer calories for their children than did parents who did not receive calorie information.

**3. I understand that a key benefit of menu labeling in chain restaurants has spurred nutritional improvements of existing foods. If convenience stores were required to comply with these menu labeling rules, do you think that they would also see an increase in nutritional foods?**

Nutrition labeling not only allows consumers to make informed choices, it also provides an incentive for companies to reformulate products and introduce healthier options, like has happened with packaged food labeling. For example, since trans fat labeling was proposed, the amount of trans fat in the U.S. food supply has decreased by 80 percent. A study in Seattle/King County found that menu labeling there led to an average decrease of 40 calories per entrée in chain restaurants. We expect that calorie labeling in convenience stores and supermarkets would lead to improvements in the nutritional quality of their offerings, as well.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



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