

THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

July 21, 2015

Dear Massachusetts Congressional Delegation:

As lead sponsors of Massachusetts House bill 3242, *An Act establishing the genetic engineering transparency food and seed labeling act*, we urge you to vote against H.R. 1599.

Introduced by Rep. Michael Pompeo (R-KS), this bill would permanently prevent states and the federal government from requiring mandatory GMO (genetically modified organism) labeling on food products. H.R. 1599 is designed to undermine our state-level efforts to provide consumers with the transparency they demand and deserve.

Over three quarters of the members of the Massachusetts General Court have co-sponsored our GMO labeling bill. This unprecedented support is a clear signal from us – your constituents – that we want mandatory GMO labeling to become law in Massachusetts in the 2015-16 legislative session.

With growing support for GMO labeling across all sectors of American society and in light of years of inaction on the federal level, Maine, Connecticut and Vermont have already passed GMO labeling laws. Our bill is modeled on theirs, to ensure a uniform standard among all our states.

In addition to preemption, H.R. 1599 would prohibit states from promulgating common-sense regulations to protect public health and the environment, for example by preventing states' efforts to create buffer zones between fields planted with GMO crops. It would all but prohibit the Food and Drug Administration from creating a national mandatory GMO labeling system, and instead would create a bogus voluntary labeling standard designed by the biotechnology industry. H.R. 1599 also allows foods labeled as "natural" foods to contain GMO ingredients – despite the fact that a national Consumer Reports poll found that 60 percent of consumers mistakenly believe that foods labeled "natural" are GMO-free.

H.R. 1599 should be rejected by Congress because:

- **Americans overwhelmingly want (and deserve) the right to know if there are GMO ingredients in their food.** National polls by Consumer Reports and the New York Times show that over 90% of consumers support labeling of GMO foods. Public support for labeling GMOs is bipartisan with 71% of Democrats and 64% of Republicans in favor of labeling.
- **The U.S. lags behind 64 other countries that already require GMO labeling.** The very same companies lobbying you to prevent GMO labeling in every single state in the U.S. are already exporting products to foreign markets where GMO food labels are required by law.
- **GMO crops have increased herbicide applications.** Expanding the use of GMO crops has increased annual applications of glyphosate – a probable human carcinogen – from 16 million pounds to more than 280 million pounds. In January, 2015, the pesticide glyphosate (commercial-name: Round-Up) was named as a probable carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

- **Labeling has a negligible impact on food costs.** According to a report commissioned by Consumers Union, the median cost to consumers of mandatory GMO labeling is \$2.30 per person per annum, or less than a penny per day. In Europe, where labeling has been in effect since 2002, there has been no measurable impact on food prices.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge you to vote NO on H.R. 1599. This gravely flawed legislation would harm our mutual constituents. It directly and intentionally would undermine the legislation we have carefully developed to respond to their needs and preferences. It inappropriately interferes with our sovereign duty to address the concerns of our Commonwealth.

Should you have any questions about this critically important matter, please do not hesitate to reach out for more information. Thank you.

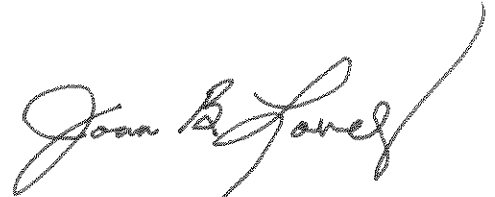
Yours sincerely,



Ellen Story
State Representative
3rd Hampshire District



Todd M. Smola
State Representative
1st Hampden District



Joan B. Lovely
State Senator
2nd Essex District