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Grace Meng
Congress of the United States
Sixth District, New York

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May 27, 2020

The Honorable Stephen Hahn, MD
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Dear Commissioner Hahn,

I write to you days after the culmination of Food Allergy Awareness Week to urge you to reverse the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision to allow temporary flexibility regarding labeling requirements for foods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While I appreciate your goal to adjust regulatory policy in order to minimize disruptions in supply chains during this pandemic, these flexibilities must not be implemented at the expense of American lives. Those with severe allergies rely on accurate ingredient lists on food labels; even an ingredient that is present in less than 2 percent of a food product can result in life-threatening anaphylactic shock. For example, as your Administration's guidance suggests, if canola oil may be substituted for sunflower oil with no change in labeling, those with sunflower seed allergies can face unexpected and increased risk.

Individuals with food allergies are already hypervigilant about their food consumption – but this has never been more necessary than during a pandemic. After all, a hospital visit for a food allergy poses enhanced risks for patients; this can also divert critical hospital resources from those battling COVID-19.

I urge you to immediately reinstate previously existing food labeling requirements. I look forward to your swift action and response.

Sincerely,

Grace Meng
Member of Congress