

**Opening Statement**

**Health Subcommittee Hearing: “Examining HR 2017, the Common Sense Nutrition Disclosure Act”**

**Rep. Gene Green**

**June 4, 2015**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

Today, we are examining legislation that would roll back a policy designed to give people access to calorie information when ordering and consuming prepared foods.

Congress embraced this principle when it mandated that nutrition information be included on packaged food more than 20 years ago.

Providing the public with calorie information allows people to make informed choices about the food they eat.

The Affordable Care Act was enacted in 2010 to improve the health of the American people and strengthen our health care system.

The main substance of the landmark law centered on expanding access to quality, affordable health insurance and put an end to some of the worse abuses of the insurance industry.

It also contained many provisions to promote preventive measures and general wellness.

We know that consumers make better health decisions when they are empowered with information.

Following this principle, Section 4205 of the Affordable Care Act requires chain restaurants and food establishments that sell prepared food to include calorie information on menus and menu boards.

Menu labeling has become increasingly important in recent decades, as people eat out much more often than before, and the obesity epidemic has reached a crisis level.

It is a simple reform to ensure that consumers have access to the same information regardless of whether eating at home or outside their home.

As we will hear from our witnesses, away-from-home foods have negatively impacted the diet and health of the American people.

Without easily accessible and standard calorie information, it is difficult to make informed choices at the point of purchase.

The legislation we are considering today will weaken this important tool.

When enacted, the provision built off of the thrust of more than a dozen state and local policies.

H.R. 2017 will undermine the compromise negotiated between a wide diversity of interests and stakeholders.

As written, it will add significant financial and public health burdens on consumers, industry, and ultimately, on taxpayer-funded budgets.

Giving supermarkets, convenience stores and other food-preparing establishments a blanket exemption to the uniform standard is unwarranted.

It is unsupported by the wealth of research on the cost of compliance, and real-world evidence from chains and restaurants that have embraced these common-sense measures.

And it will create an uneven playing field for competition amongst businesses.

I appreciate the concerns raised by stakeholders represented here today with menu labeling requirements.

While I do not support the legislation being considered by this Subcommittee, I am sympathetic to concerns about the timing of implementation and enforcement.

Due to a lack of guidance and outstanding questions on the agency's rule, I ask the FDA to provide at least a year of additional time for food establishments to comply.

The law does not include a statutory deadline.

The FDA should extend the implementation period to give industry time to review such guidance, address outstanding issues, and comply with this important requirement.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman for calling a hearing on this issue.

When considering legislation, we must always keep the priority of transforming our broken "health sick" system into a true "health care" system in mind.

Again, thank you and I yield the back the balance of my time.