

Giannoulas, Preston, Stava-Murray Move To Ban Harmful Food Chemicals

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SPRINGFIELD - In a push to ensure that Illinoisans eat safer, healthier food, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulas, State Senator Willie Preston (D-Chicago) and State Representative Anne Stava-Murray (D-Downers Grove) have initiated legislation to ban harmful chemicals in candy, soda and other ultra-processed, packaged foods sold here.

The Illinois Food Safety Act – or Senate Bill 2637 – calls for prohibiting the use of brominated vegetable oil, potassium bromate, propylparaben, Red Dye No. 3 and titanium dioxide – all of which have been linked to serious health problems, including hyperactivity, nervous system damage, reproductive issues, hormonal damage and increased risk of cancer.

Because of health concerns, the use of these chemicals in food items is already prohibited in the European Union and several other countries. Last fall, California enacted a law that banned four of the five additives, which takes effect in 2027, and New York is considering similar legislation.

“Our goal with this legislation is to create a healthier marketplace for Illinois families,” Giannoulas said. “The purpose of this legislation isn’t to ban any products or take food off shelves; it’s to ensure food manufacturers update recipes to use alternative, safer ingredients that are already used in other places around the world, including soon in other parts of the U.S.”

"People should be able to trust that the food they buy won't lead to deadly diseases such as cancer. That's why I've drafted and proposed SB2637 to ban Red Dye #3, Brominated Vegetable Oil, Potassium Bromate, Propylparaben, and Titanium Dioxide," Preston said. "I want Illinoisans to be more confident when grocery shopping that they are not purchasing products that are laced with ingredients classified as toxic and harmful for human consumption. The European Union and California have already banned these harmful ingredients. Illinois must take the steps necessary to protect the health and wellness of our citizens."

“Illinois families should not have to worry that the food they buy for themselves and their kids may contain harmful substances that can cause neurological and reproductive symptoms, or even cancer,” Stava-Murray said. “When new scientific data casts doubt on whether an ingredient or additive is safe to consume, it’s important that that substance be removed from the food supply.”

The advocates emphasized the law is aimed at protecting children, who are more likely to consume food products that contain these chemicals. Children are also at a greater risk to suffer the negative impacts from food additives because their developing organs are more vulnerable.

As Secretary of State, Giannoulas oversees the state’s organ donation registry and stressed the importance of healthy organs for individuals suffering from life-threatening diseases or injuries who need transplants.

In addition, the Illinois legislation calls on an Illinois-based university or research-focused institution to study the health risks associated with two other additives – butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), which would be subject to additional regulations if it is determined they pose a significant health risk.

Additional support for SB 2637:

“In keeping with our commitment to reducing the number of people waiting for a lifesaving transplant, we support the Illinois Food Safety Act,” said Kevin Lee, President and CEO of Mid-America Transplant. “Efforts to make food healthier enhance

overall wellbeing and help prevent individuals from needing a transplant later in life. We believe this legislation will promote healthy lifestyles and reduce diseases that can lead to the need for transplant.”

“The Food Safety Act protects the most vulnerable Illinoisans, particularly our children whose organs are still developing,” said Marion L. Shuck, Executive Vice President of Governmental and External Affairs at Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network. “I urge our legislators to approve this proposal, which will keep our communities healthier and less frequently in need of live-saving transplants.”

“The FDA has failed for decades to keep us safe from toxic food chemicals,” said Scott Faber, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a non-profit, non-partisan organization that empowers people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. “In the absence of federal regulation, it falls to the states to keep us safe from toxic chemicals in cereals, salad dressings, candy and other foods our families enjoy. We applaud the Secretary and Illinois lawmakers seeking to remove these additives from Illinois' food supply.”

The foods that our children consume starting from birth have a significant impact on their development and future health,” said Dr. Payal Adhikari, a pediatrician and Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics (FAAP) at Northwestern Children’s Practice, which specializes in healthy lifestyles. “We are excited to have leaders who take initiative to make sure the safest options are available to our community.”

“The Illinois Academy of PAs is committed to improving the health of Illinoisans by increasing access to health care and promoting healthier options for diet and lifestyle,” said Timothy Kinsey, DMSc, PA-C, President of the Illinois Academy of Physician Assistants. “We strongly support the Secretary of State, Sen. Preston and Rep. Stava-Murray's efforts to improve nutrition for Illinois residents.”