



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

Chair of Senate Appropriations
Senate Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Room 2200
Sacramento, California

Re: SPONSORSHIP OF SB 68 – The ADDE Bill – Menjivar

May 15, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Caballero,

On behalf of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) and the more than 20 million Americans living with life-threatening food allergies, I am writing to express that AAFA is a proud sponsor for SB 68, Allergen Disclosure for Dining Experiences (ADDE). AAFA is the leading patient organization for people with asthma and allergies, and the oldest asthma and allergy patient organization in the world. Kids with Food Allergies, a division of AAFA, offers tools, education, and community to families and children coping with food allergies across the country.

SB 68 ADDE is inspired by nine-year-old advocate Addie Lao and would ensure that the top 9 allergens (milk, egg, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanut, wheat, soy, and sesame) are documented for restaurant-type food to protect millions of Californians with life-threatening food allergies when dining out in California. After hearing feedback from industry stakeholders, we are confident that the amendments offered by Senator Menjivar will reduce the cost of this bill and ensure the method of written disclosure is more flexible for restaurants. AAFA is in strong support of documenting allergens on main menus, separate allergen booklets, or allergen charts.

This legislation does not attempt to address the complexities of a fast-paced restaurant environment and the risk of cross-contact with allergens in the kitchen. Instead, this bill ameliorates the problem of asymmetrical information by requiring

restaurants to share ingredient details they already know, giving customers the information they need to make informed, safer dining decisions. SB 68 ADDE asks restaurants to repurpose existing information to support an estimated 2.5 million California with life-threatening food allergies.^{1,2} The positive spillover effect extends to the parents, siblings, partners, relatives, and friends of those with food allergies who want to participate in the special occasions and everyday social engagements that take place in restaurants with their loved one.

By reducing the barriers to information, restaurants and small businesses will benefit from greater patronage from families of those with food allergies. In our 2019 parent survey report, *My Life With Food Allergy*, AAFA's research team found that nearly 90% of parents have avoided certain restaurants due to their child's allergy.³ Surveyed parents communicated the need for greater availability of information about the contents of restaurant meals and asked regulators to prioritize better food labeling inside restaurants.⁴ The estimated 7.5 million individuals that either have a food allergy or a family member with an allergy in California would increase expenditure and feel empowered to dine out, rather than avoid risks when information is hidden.

Exposure to an allergen can cause severe reactions, including anaphylaxis and, in rare cases, death. Because there is no cure for food allergies, awareness and preparedness are key for protecting health and saving lives. Adverse reactions to food at restaurants are common, and account for half of food allergy fatalities.⁵ Relying solely on verbal communication between waitstaff and customers about dietary needs often leads to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misinformation— factors that account for accidental allergen exposures in dining

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, January 26). *More than a quarter of U.S. adults and children have at least one allergy*. National Center for Health Statistics.

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *National population totals and components of change: 2020–2023*. U.S. Department of Commerce.

³ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. (2019). *My life with food allergy: Parent survey report*. (p. 16)

⁴ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, 2019, p. 38

⁵ Weiss, C., & Munoz-Furlong, A. (2008). Fatal food allergy reactions in restaurants and food-service establishments: Strategies for prevention. *Food Protection Trends*, 28, 657–661.

settings. Without written documentation of which menu items contain the top 9 allergens, 2.5 million Californians are forced to entrust their lives to staff who may not be equipped with accurate information.^{6,7}

The current system gives customers a false sense of security, as verbal assurances from staff can mistakenly lead them to believe a dish is safe when it's not. Addie Lao, nine-year-old advocate and co-sponsor of ADDE, calls the noisy dinnertime bustle a bad time to play "a game of telephone" when accuracy has life-threatening consequences. Rather than a simple dining preference, food allergies are chronic diseases that can be fatal. In December 2024, 34-year-old California resident Dominique Brown passed away in Los Angeles after suffering from an anaphylactic reaction at a holiday food event.⁸ Needless tragedies, including Dominique's passing in December 2024, can be avoided by passing the ADDE Act which would allow all consumers to be aware of the allergens contained within restaurant meals.

SB 68 ADDE doesn't replace conversations about customer's allergies, it encourages them. By giving customers written allergen information, it helps them ask better questions and make informed decisions. A study in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology in Practice* found that only 13.7% of allergic reactions occurred when both a conversation *and* written allergen documentation were present. This combined approach offers the strongest protection for both food-allergic customers and restaurant owners. Each method alone would be insufficient to appropriately address safety concerns in dining settings.

SB 68 ADDE would be the first of its kind in the United States, and, if passed, California would meet the global standard that has developed over the last decade to

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, January 26). *More than a quarter of U.S. adults and children have at least one allergy*. National Center for Health Statistics.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *National population totals and components of change: 2020–2023*. U.S. Department of Commerce.

⁸ Asperin, A. M. (2024, December 9). Disney influencer Dominique Brown dies at 34. *FOX 11 Los Angeles*. <https://www.foxla.com/news/disney-influencer-dominique-brown-dies-food-allergy>

document top allergens on menus. California Governor Gavin Newsom recognizes that "California dominates as a premier destination for travelers throughout the nation, and around the globe." An important upcoming deadline for dining sector enhancements includes the upcoming Summer Olympics in 2028 that will be held in California. If SB 68 ADDE is passed and implemented, international and domestic visitors to California will be able to access transparency in dining that is already easily accessible in 30 countries.

California restaurants are well-equipped to take this food safety requirement on, thanks to several decades of work done by the restaurant industry and advocates in California. The California Natalie Giorgi Sunshine Act in 2019 requires that all American National Standards Institute-accredited food handler training courses include instruction on major food allergens, symptoms of severe allergic reactions, and safe food handling practices for allergens (including cross-contact and the serving of food for those with food allergies). SB 68 ADDE would be the next step to make our restaurants safe and inclusive.

California already mandates inspections of restaurants and other food facilities, primarily conducted by local health agencies, and this check for allergen labeling on menus would likely add a marginal amount of time to each of these yearly checks. In the U.K., an enhanced labeling law was passed in 2021 for foods prepacked for direct sale, and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) based in the U.K. conducted a study to understand how much longer allergen labeling would take local health inspectors to complete. They found that most health inspections (79%) took an additional 30 minutes or less due to the new law, which goes above and beyond the requirements of ADDE by requiring a full ingredients list.⁹

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America is one of numerous organizations that support this bill. AAFA organized a joint letter to the Senate Health Committee

⁹ Food Standards Agency. (2023). *Effects of PPDS labelling requirements – PPDS evaluation*. <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/effects-of-ppds-labelling-requirements-ppds-evaluation>

with more than 30+ local and national organizations, 500 medical professionals based in California, and nearly a thousand signatures before the April 9, 2025 Committee Hearing. That number has only continued to grow.

Many organizations have signed on to our joint-letter, and others submitted their own letter of support. To demonstrate this wide collection of advocacy organizations, restaurants, professional associations, and medical groups, AAFA has collected a list of the organizations supporting the bill as of May 14, 2025:

A Voice for Choice Advocacy	California Society of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology
Allergic Living	
AllergyStrong	California Association of Physician Associates
American Academy of Pediatrics California	California Association for Nurse Practitioners
American College of Allergy Asthma, and Immunology (ACAAI)	Center for Science in the Public Interest
American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association	Constellation Culinary, Academy Cafe of California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco
American Nurses Association California	CURED NFP
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	Elijah-Alavi Foundation
Asthma and Allergy Network	Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Connection Team (FAACT)
Black Women for Wellness Action Project	Food Allergy Fund
CaterMarin Catering	Food Allergy Nurses Association
California Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics	Food Allergy Science Initiative
	Food Allergy Support Team of the East Bay (FAST-EB)

Food is Good, Inc

Foodini

Gold Mirror Restaurant

International FPIES Association

Lauren's Hope Medical ID

Lorissa's Kitchen

Little Aloha

Mango Haus

MenuTrinfo, LLC

Natalie Giorgi Sunshine Foundation

National Action Network, Inc

National Celiac Association

National Association of Pediatric Nurse
Practitioners – California

National Association of Pediatric Nurse
Practitioners– National

National Association of Social Workers
– California Chapter

Nut Free Wok

No Nut Traveler

Rady Children's Hospital

Red Sneakers for Oakley

Red Sneakers for Oakley Peoria

Dr. Ruchi Gupta, Director of CFAAR
(Center for Food Allergy and Asthma
Research)

San Francisco Bay Area Moms

Shima's Tasty Foods

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical
Society (SSVMS)

SnackSafely.com

Spokin

Sutter Health Children's Surgical
Specialists

The Caring Kitchen

The FPIES Foundation

The Game Parlour

The Good Life Pizza

The Zacky Project

Translational Pulmonary and
Immunology Research Institute

Two Alpha Gals

Palio SF

Veggie Grill

Vitality Bowls

Zestfull



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

AAFA strongly encourages the legislature to pass this bill into law. Thank you very much for your work to protect the health and wellbeing of California children and adults with food allergies.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Mendez
President and Chief Executive Officer
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America