



May 22, 2025

The Honorable Amy Paulin
LOB 823
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Chairwoman Paulin,

We, the undersigned organizations, write today on behalf of the 1.1 million New York residents living with a food allergy to express our strong support of A1397.^{1,2} We believe that this bill will improve food safety for millions of residents of New York with food allergies by requiring training and awareness in restaurants and maintain a voluntary program to incentivize written documentation of ingredients for restaurant menu items.

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.³

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 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.

Miscommunication and a lack of understanding of the severity of this chronic condition are frequent contributors to these incidents. In the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America's 2019 parent survey report, *My Life With Food Allergy*, AAFA found that one of the greatest barriers to eating out safely was the lack of labeling policies and insufficient training of staff in restaurants.⁴ A1397 helps to fill those gaps by requiring training for restaurant staff and offering a voluntary framework to encourage written ingredient documentation.

Enhancing food safety is not just a public health improvement, it is also an avenue to boost business to local restaurants. Restaurants that take proactive steps to have their staff trained and provide written documentation of ingredients stand to benefit from increased patronage from loyal customers with food allergies. In fact, our research found that nearly 90% of parents surveyed avoided certain restaurants altogether due to their child's allergy.⁵ This significant proportion reflects a significant market loss for food establishments and a clear need for public health intervention.

The passage of A1397 will reduce the number of allergic reactions in restaurants and improve the lives of 1.1 million New Yorkers with a food allergy. We urge swift passage and enactment of this bill.

Sincerely,

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA)

Kenneth Mendez

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Robyn Lao DNP, CPNP-AC

Allergies With Mia

Mia Silverman

⁴ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. (2019). *My Life With Food Allergy: Parent Survey Report*. Retrieved from aafa.org/foodallergylife.

⁵ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. (2019). *My Life With Food Allergy: Parent Survey Report*. Retrieved from aafa.org/foodallergylife.



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

AllergyStrong

Erin Malawer

American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology

Susan L. Grupe

CURED Nfp

Ellyn Kodroff

Elijah-Alavi Foundation

Thomas Silvera

Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Connection Team (FAACT)

Eleanor Garrow-Holding

Foodini

Dylan McDonnell

International FPIES Association

Fallon Shultz

MenuTrinfo and AllerTrain

Betsy Craig

Natalie Giorgi Sunshine Foundation

Louis Giorgi, Jr., MD

No Nut Traveler

Lianne Mandelbaum

Nut Free Wok

Sharon Wong

SnackSafely.com

Dave Bloom