

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce urges the House to consider and pass before the upcoming recess S. 764, a bill, which passed the Senate on July 7, to establish a federal standard for biotechnology in agriculture and preempt state labeling regimes.

The Chamber applauds the Senate for passing this strong bipartisan legislation that would prevent increased costs and the chaos that would result from myriad individual state regulations for labeling food products that are sold nationwide. The legislation would provide disclosure options for companies that would be regulated and more flexibility for small and very small food manufacturers. The legislation also would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture to undertake a study to ensure that appropriate technology is available for consumers to easily access such information.

At the same time, the legislation would provide consumers with access to more information about food products, if they want it, without driving up costs for the most vulnerable populations. Critically important, that information could be found without stigmatizing ingredients that are produced from, or that contain, biotechnology. Biotechnology is the future of food, agriculture, and medicine, and it is a cornerstone of domestic investment and innovation.

The legislation would strike the right balance by providing regulatory certainty for the food supply chain, allowing consumers to obtain more information if they want it, and protecting the biotechnology industry from harmful and stigmatizing mandatory warning labels.

The Chamber commends the leadership of Reps. Pompeo and Butterfield and their cosponsors for crafting bipartisan House-passed legislation on this issue. If not for their important work, legislation to address this issue would have continued to languish. It is unfortunate that to some degree the regular order process on legislation to address agriculture biotechnology broke down. With a patchwork of state-level regulation of biotechnology in agriculture growing – particularly with the newly-effective Vermont labeling law – it is imperative that Congress acts as swiftly as practicable.

The Chamber urges the House to approve S. 764 without amendment before the upcoming Congressional recess.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten