

Florida House of Representatives

1302 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

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Representative, District 60

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Dear Representative,

MENU LABELING – HB 783

Health care costs are increasing at an unsustainable rate and almost all of the discussion both at the state and federal level is about 1) redistribution of the costs, or 2) simply rationing the care. The fact that health care costs go down when people get healthy is not being mentioned.

The costs of treating tobacco related disease has dropped in half now that the percentage of people smoking has dropped 50%. The costs of treating obesity related disease however is increasing exponentially and obesity and its consequences have now become our most expensive health care issue.

Printing articles about obesity and dieting in the tabloids have not made a difference in our nation's eating habits. A more direct approach is to let people know what they are eating by simply posting on or in the menus how many calories are in their order.

The research on this issue (attached) shows:

1. That people want this information (80%).
2. There is no loss of revenue to the restaurant.
3. The costs are minimal and the chains have already done their homework, you just have to ask to see it (less than 0.1% do).
4. For those customers who want to know, it does make a difference of 250 calories/meal average.
5. For those people who don't consider calories with their order, they are not offended by the information.
6. There are restaurants that do this already and posting calories has not touched their customer base except in a positive way for those customers who want to know.

Last year I listened to the Florida Restaurant Association and tried to construct the bill in a way that would be the easiest to live with and still accomplish the goal of informing the public by:

- a. Allowing the display of the information in different ways at the least expense and trouble as long as the customer can see it before the order is placed (similar to the federal LEAN Act)
- b. Calculating the calories by any "reasonable" means. The purpose is to compare one item on the menu to another on the menu, not one restaurant to another, and certainly not to compare restaurants in different states.

The food service establishments

1. Only need to post the calories for their regular items that are on the menus more than 90 days. New dishes, seasonal items, or "specials" are less than the 90 day requirement and are therefore exempt.
2. Are exempt from liability concerning this requirement unless they make no attempt to fulfill the intent of the bill and then there is a 90 day warning.

This bill is a HEALTH bill and is the type of legislation that makes so much more sense than insulin and heart stents.

This is a policy bill that will require more leadership than I can possibly provide alone. Will you please review the attachments and then co-sponsor the bill with me so we can have the bill heard before the Insurance, Business & Financial Affairs Policy Committee chaired by Representative Pat Patterson.

Sincerely,



Ed Homan, M.D.