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House Health Committee
February 3, 2026
House Bill 181 – *Public Health – Restaurants – Disclosure of Main Food Allergens*
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports with amendment** House Bill 181.

House Bill 181 requires a restaurant to make available written disclosure of each main food allergen, if any, that the restaurant knows or reasonably should know is contained as an ingredient in each menu item. The restaurant should use common names of the main food allergies or standardized pictograms to communicate the presence of a main food allergen. The bill offers a variety of ways to satisfy the requirement, including written or digital formats. Lastly, the bill imposes criminal and civil penalties for violating this requirement.

Importantly, the American Medical Association’s policy on *Preventing Allergic Reactions in Food Service Establishments* directs that restaurants should include a notice on menus reminding customers to inform staff of any food allergies and should educate staff regarding common food allergens and the need to address them appropriately. House Bill 181 underscores the medical community’s acknowledgement that food allergies are not trivial preferences but potentially life-threatening conditions requiring clear communication and awareness in dining environments. Even small exposures to common allergens can be life threatening, and requiring this transparency would help to prevent avoidable allergic reactions.

While MedChi supports allergen disclosure requirements, we would prefer a different mechanism than the criminal penalties and fines currently outlined to enforce the bill. Providing opportunities for remediation before penalties are assessed would more effectively promote compliance, while maintaining strong public health protections. MedChi urges a favorable report on House Bill 181, with amendments to modify the penalties for enforcement.

For more information:

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