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March 30, 2004

Lester M. Crawford, DVM, PhD
Deputy Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane (HF-1/14-71/PKLN)
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Deputy Commissioner Crawford,

I am writing to urge you to develop and implement a clear, consistent policy regarding the recall of foods with undeclared allergens, a policy that protects millions of Americans with food allergies, including my son, and many of my patients.

My son has a life threatening allergy to peanuts. This is not an inconvenience or intolerance. My son's allergic reactions in the past have included anaphylactoid symptoms: facial angioedema, airway swelling, bronchospasm, hypoxia, generalized urticaria, vomiting and hypotension. Emergency room care has been needed on several occasions.

We have trained our son to read labels to decide which foods are safe for him to eat. In the past we have been able to trust the accuracy of food labels and know that our Food and Drug Administration would protect us by recalling foods that were mislabeled. It is our policy that our son does not eat anything that is without a label on it, unless it comes from home. Allowing my son to eat foods that are not properly labeled would be like letting a child play with a gun, shrugging your shoulders and hoping the gun was not loaded.

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We depend on our Food and Drug Administration's oversight and enforcement to encourage food manufacturers to do their best to label foods correctly, and to work quickly to remove mislabeled foods from the market. To step away from this responsibility is, in my opinion, a gross negligence of duty.

My son could die from eating peanut. There are millions of other Americans with similar life threatening food allergy. It is crucial to me, to my family, and to my patients to have ingredient labels that are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy. It is equally crucial for the Food and Drug Administration, as our federal agency in charge of food safety, to lead the charge in recalling food items with undeclared allergens.

Sincerely,



Kathryn C. Limmer, MD
Attending Pediatrician
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Copies to:

The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network
U.S. Representative Joseph M. Hoeffel
Senator Rick Santorum
Senator Arlen Specter