April 27, 2009

Assembly Member Mike Feuer
California State Assembly
State Capitol
10th & L Streets
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Feuer,

The Center for Science in the Public Interest¹ (CSPI) strongly supports AB 1372, which would create significant food safety requirements for much of California’s food processing industry. Requiring processors to establish Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans, test products regularly for pathogens, and report positive results to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) within 24 hours, will help to ensure safer food for California consumers.

Consumer confidence in the safety of the food supply has been sorely shaken in recent years in the wake of repeated recalls and outbreaks of foodborne illness. A 2009 survey by the University of Minnesota showed that 78.5 percent of consumers were not confident that the food supply is safer today than a year ago. Forty-eight percent of those questioned in a Consumers Union poll from November 2008 said their confidence had declined. A second 2008 poll conducted by Ipsos-MacClatchy reported that 28 percent of consumers believe food safety had gotten worse and 46 percent gave food safety controls a failing grade.

Unfortunately, the problems are not limited to fresh products. In the last several months, the recalls of peanuts and pistachios—and thousands of the products made with them—have underscored the problem of contamination in processed foods. With over 700 consumers sickened and 9 dead from Salmonella- contaminated peanuts, it is clear that something must be done. The Food and Drug Administration, the federal agency responsible for ensuring the safety of these products, inspects food processing facilities on average only once every ten years and inspects just 1% of the foods coming in from other countries. The agency has no authority to require companies to recall their potentially contaminated products, and doesn’t require companies to test their products for pathogens or to disclose to FDA when contaminants are found.

AB 1372 takes a significant step toward protecting consumers by requiring processors to establish and implement HACCP plans, test for pathogens, and report positive results to the CDPH. These measures will help to ensure that California’s consumers—and those consumers in states importing California products—are eating safer food. We applaud your efforts and lend our strong support to AB 1372. We urge the members of the California Assembly and the California Senate to pass AB 1372, to improve the safety of the food supply and to signal a true commitment to the health of California consumers.

Sincerely,

Sarah A. Klein, J.D., M.A.
Staff Attorney, Food Safety Program

¹ CSPI is a nonprofit health advocacy and education organization focused on food safety, nutrition, and alcohol issues. CSPI is supported principally by the 950,000 subscribers to its Nutrition Action HealthLetter and by foundation grants. We accept no government or industry funding.