

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 2, 2023

American Bakers Association
Eric Dell, President and CEO
601 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Dell,

We are writing to express our extreme concern and disappointment in the baking industry's response to the 2021 Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act, which recognized sesame as the ninth major food allergen in the United States. The FASTER Act was designed to improve the health and safety of those living with food allergies by collecting information on food allergens and allergy prevalence and requiring appropriate labeling on products that contain sesame.

Instead of acting to protect consumers, manufacturers are adding trace amounts of sesame to their baking products since the passage of the FASTER Act. It appears that this is being done to avoid the costs associated with the processes and systems controls necessary to ensure safe baking practices.

The dangerous practice of adding sesame to baked goods that have not previously contained the ingredient, often without notice, undermines the trust that people with food allergies place in the food industry.

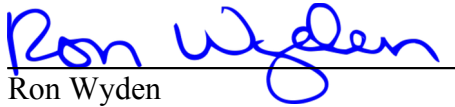
The baking industry had nearly two years to comply with the requirements of the FASTER Act, and along the way gave no indication that these new protection standards could not be met. After the FASTER Act was signed into law, the American Bakers Association (ABA) publicly agreed that it should not be a problem for bakers to make production changes to handle sesame as an allergen in their bakeries. We applaud the fourteen brands that have confirmed their facilities are dedicated free of sesame and hope the ABA will encourage more bakers to do the same.

Sesame allergies impact more than 1.5 million Americans, half of which are children, and reactions can be serious and life threatening. Before the FASTER Act, families with sesame allergies were challenged to know if sesame was in the products they were buying. Now families are struggling to find products without sesame as previously trusted restaurants and brands have engaged in this dangerous practice of adding sesame. These actions undercut the purpose and intent of the FASTER Act and put the lives of consumers at risk.

It is imperative that the baking industry take immediate action to address this issue. The health and safety of consumers should always be a top priority. The baking industry has a responsibility to protect the public, especially those with food allergies, and the intentional new addition of a known allergen to products goes against this responsibility. It's time to act to rectify the situation.

We strongly condemn these practices and urge your members to take the steps necessary to implement safety control measures. No company should be allowed to avoid the costs associated with safe baking practices and risk public health and safety for those with life-threatening food allergies. We will look for your written response May 16, 2023. The baking industry must do the right thing.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Patrick T. McHenry
Member of Congress



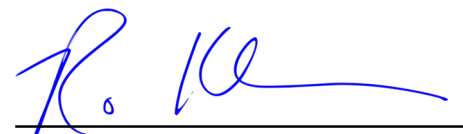
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Dean Phillips
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress