

Testimony on Senate Bill 730 by Angela J. Boldrey

Contact information: Cell 517-281-3327

Email jerkatis@yahoo.com

Hello, my name is Angela Boldrey. I've come today to talk in support of Senate Bill 730 and tell you a little about what it's like for my daughter to eat at restaurants with severe food allergies.

During my daughter, Becca's, last dairy allergy test, Becca was over 3 times the threshold to classify her allergy as "Very High Level of Allergy" by Sparrow labs. Even one bite of dairy: milk, butter, or cheese, can start anaphylaxis for her, which means use of epinephrine, a call to 911, an ambulance ride, and a 4-hour emergency room visit. For Becca, eliminating dairy from her diet isn't a lifestyle choice, it's not an intolerance, it's a matter of life and death.

It's these bouts of anaphylaxis that we are here to speak about. You see, Becca had not 1 but 2 trips to the ER last December within 10 days of each other and both of them were caused by accidentally ingesting dairy at restaurants and I think SB 730 could help with that. I'd like to speak to you about one of these restaurant trips today.

First of all, I want to stress that we don't just randomly pick restaurants and we didn't when we decided to try a new one last December. I had done some internet research prior to our visit and found a local chain sit-down restaurant that had a very comprehensive food allergy menu. So we decided to give it a try. Our waitress had seemed very well trained regarding food allergies. After eating out with a food allergy child, you begin to sense who really knows how to deal with food allergies and who doesn't by the language they use. "Cross contamination", "hidden allergens", and "separate preparation area" are all things I look to hear when speaking with wait staff and this was the "language" that we heard the first time at this establishment and we had a great, and most importantly safe, experience there.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said when we ate there again a week later. Everything started off normally. We asked for the allergy menu for Becca and when giving orders, reminded our waitress twice that Becca had a severe dairy allergy we were ordering off the dairy-free menu for her.

Regrettably, that information was not relayed to the kitchen. After taking two bites, Becca immediately came to me and told me her throat felt funny. My heart sank because I knew she was starting to have a reaction to something and her epi-pen would need to be used. Luckily we're prepared for this.

As I was taking Becca out to a hallway and administering her epi-pen, my husband, Lance, immediately spoke to our waitress and asked about possible dairy in Becca's meal. He was told that she had forgotten to add "dairy free" to Becca's order but that it shouldn't matter as "there was only a cup of butter added to a pot of broccoli".

Talking to the corporate attorney for this chain later, I found out that neither waitress we had was following the restaurant's corporate allergy protocol, which is to alert the manager regarding food allergies and at that time the manager will place all orders with the kitchen, ensuring the safest food preparation possible. We were actually just lucky that our first visit there had a server who had food allergy experience. Without Senate Bill 730, a lot of times, eating out for our family is like taking a roll of the dice. You're not sure how your dining experience will turn out as you can't guarantee you have staff trained in how to keep your child safe.

I truly believe that Senate Bill 730 would make restaurants a safer place for Becca and kids like her. Having a person trained in food allergies at every restaurant would open up dialogue about what would be safe to eat without us having to guess the protocol of the restaurant and the knowledge of the server. Believe it or not, we as a family are completely fine with restaurants telling us that they can't safely serve us, as is their right under this bill. At least then we know and don't have to take a guess on what's not dangerous for Becca.

I would like to urge you to support Senate Bill 730 and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.