

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

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VIA FACSIMILE

Dear Representative:

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters strongly urges you to support H.R. 2693, the "Popcorn Workers Lung Disease Prevention Act," and to oppose any amendments that would weaken or delay this vitally important workplace safety legislation.

Diacetyl is an artificial butter-flavoring chemical used in the manufacture of microwave popcorn and other food products. Exposure to diacetyl has been found to cause a devastating lung disease known as bronchiolitis obliterans, or "popcorn lung". Tens of thousands of workers at microwave popcorn plants and flavor manufacturing facilities are exposed to this dangerous chemical every day. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has described diacetyl as causing "astonishingly grotesque" effects in workers' lungs, often in a very short period of time. Dozens of workers at microwave popcorn factories, or factories where flavorings are produced, have become sick, suffering severe occupational lung disease. Many await lung transplants and several have died.

H.R. 2693 will require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an emergency interim final standard within 90 days to protect workers at popcorn and flavorings manufacturing plants, minimize exposure to diacetyl, and require OSHA to then issue a final standard within 2 years that would apply to locations where diacetyl is processed or used. The interim standard would remain in effect until the final standard is issued.

The measures in the bill are the same measures already recommended (in 2004) by the Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association, the main industry association for the flavorings industry. The Association has voted to support the

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legislation and the issuance of an OSHA standard. The bill's provisions are also consistent with recommendations from NIOSH.

OSHA has known that diacetyl causes bronchiolitis obliterans (popcorn lung) for over 5 years. Despite urgings to address this serious health hazard, OSHA has failed to act.

In July of 2006, the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Teamsters Union, along with scientists from the George Washington University, petitioned OSHA to promulgate an Emergency Temporary Standard to regulate facilities that use diacetyl. Forty-two of the nation's leading occupational safety scientists supported this petition, agreeing that there is more than enough evidence for OSHA to regulate this dangerous chemical. OSHA has *yet* to make a determination regarding this petition.

There are well-known, effective methods that can protect workers from exposure to diacetyl. In our judgment, it is unconscionable that these workers should have to wait any longer for a safety standard. Ignoring or pretending that this deadly workplace hazard does not exist will not make it go away. It will only callously expose more workers to this debilitating and sometimes deadly disease.

On behalf of our members who work in the food industry, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, again, urges you to reject any weakening or delaying amendments and to vote for H.R. 2693.

Sincerely,



Frederick P. McLuckie
Legislative Director
Government Affairs Department