



RI Department of Health  
Three Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Melissa A. Murray, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: S 272 – An Act Relating to Food and Drugs -- Healthy Kids Act**

Dear Chair Murray:

Please accept this letter of concerns regarding S 272, legislation that would mandate that all restaurants offering children's meals, offer at least 2 children's meals that complies with certain detailed nutritional standards set forth in the bill. There are approximately 7,000 restaurants in Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) applauds the intent of the proposed legislation, which is to establish and enforce environmental food changes to address rising childhood obesity and associated chronic disease emergence in Rhode Island. However, RIDOH would not be able to implement the provisions outlined in the bill without adequate resources. As written, S 272 requires RIDOH to:

- Send a copy of the law and other written informational resources to all restaurants in Rhode Island within 90 days of the enactment of the law; and
- Develop written informational resources and signage in English and Spanish summarizing the statutory requirements for restaurants and their employees.

RIDOH would need additional staffing capacity to develop and disseminate the required informational materials and respond to complaints received against restaurants that do not comply with the statutory requirements as outlined in the bill. Specifically, RIDOH would need an FTE nutritionist (Grade 27) at an annual cost of \$116,544. This amount is anticipated to increase in future years due to increases in salary and benefits. RIDOH would also need resources for content development, tracking, and analytics at a cost of \$1,850 in year one. Without these resources, RIDOH is unable to implement the proposed legislation as currently drafted.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome M. Larkin".

Jerome M. Larkin, MD  
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Pamela J. Lauria  
Kristen Silvia, Director of Legislation and Deputy Chief of Staff  
Joseph Masino, Director of Senate Policy