



**Maryland Chamber of Commerce**

## **Legislative Position**

**SB 539  
OPPOSE**

**Finance  
Committee**

**2/24/10**

### **SB 539**

#### **Public Health – Chain Restaurants – Nutrition Information Labeling**

**Bill Summary:** This bill would require chain restaurants with more than 15 locations to: (1) List the number of calories contained in a standard menu item; (2) Provide additional caloric and component information regarding the food at the request of a customer; and (3) Post prominently a clear and concise statement on the menu regarding suggested daily caloric intake and other information. Local health departments would enforce the law, with the authority to impose civil penalties of up to \$1,000 for non-compliance.

**Chamber Position:** The Maryland Chamber of Commerce opposes this bill because it presents a cumbersome and unequal method of addressing a public health issue that is better resolved at the federal level. The bill distinguishes between types of restaurants, requiring certain chain restaurants to provide nutritional information, while identical food sold at other types of stores requires no nutritional information.

The fiscal note observes that legislation is pending in Congress that would create national standards for nutritional labeling at restaurants. This legislation has widespread support and will likely be enacted this year. We believe that it would be inadvisable for Maryland restaurants to bear the expense of creating nutritional labeling based on state legislation, only to discard it and create new nutritional information based on federal standards. We ask that the General Assembly defer this legislation while the federal legislation is enacted.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report for this bill.

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