

Dear Representative _____,

I am a patient with celiac disease/family member or friend of someone who has celiac disease. I am writing to you today to ask you to support the Gluten in Medicine Disclosure Act of 2015 (H.R.3648).

Celiac disease is a genetic autoimmune disorder that leads to small intestine damage by gluten and affects 1 in 100 people worldwide. There is currently no treatment for celiac disease other than switching to a completely gluten-free diet, a process which can be extremely difficult due to financial and temporal constraints. Gluten is found in wheat, barley, and rye, and unfortunately, is extremely prevalent in most processed foods today. Additionally, the risks of cross-contamination in restaurants and factories make switching to a gluten-free diet very difficult. We have watched family members afflicted by celiac disease transition to more active and manageable lifestyle after eliminating gluten from their diet, as well as seen how accidental consumption of gluten results in nearly immediate symptoms, including joint pain and fatigue.

Even an extremely small amount of gluten (as little 2 parts per million) is enough to make some individuals with celiac disease extremely ill. Therefore it is essential that those living with this disease receive the government support they need in order to manage their lifestyle and remain healthy. Celiac disease is also severely undiagnosed--it is estimated that only 17% of those affected in the United States have a diagnosis, leaving 2.5 million Americans undiagnosed and at risk for severe long-term health complications, including anemia, infertility, osteoporosis, and neurological disorders. We met with members of a local celiac disease support group in Rice County who shared their difficulties finding affordable gluten-free foods and products, including cosmetics, soaps, and medicine.

I am writing specifically today to inform you of a current bill being proposed by representatives Tim Ryan (OH) and Nita Lowey (NY) that would prevent accidental consumption of gluten for those with celiac disease. The bill, the Gluten in Medicine Disclosure Act of 2015 (H.R.3648), would simply require that pharmaceuticals containing ingredients derived from a grain or starch identify the source of that ingredient. This is pertinent because those affected with celiac often have many comorbid conditions and have to take medications for them. If these medications unknowingly contain gluten, individuals may suffer from symptoms of celiac while trying to treat another disease. People have the right to trust that their medications will improve their health, rather than worsen it. This bill would improve the quality of life for millions of people in Minnesota and the rest of the United States suffering from celiac disease, including fellow students at Carleton College who suffer from celiac disease.

I ask that you please take a moment to think about the bill and the implications it could have in so many people's lives. The bill was introduced to the House of Representatives in September of 2015 and assigned to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, but currently lacks a Senate companion. If you want any more information about this, I invite you to visit:

<https://celiac.org/blog/2015/10/cdf-joins-with-representatives-tim-ryan-and-nita-lowey-in-introducing-the-gluten-in-medicine-identification-act/>

Thank you for your time!