



Press Release

AAFA Celebrates Massive Health Policy Change; Lawmakers Pass FASTER Act Making Sesame A Major Food Allergen

Bill also promotes food allergy research; Moves to White House to be signed into law



Washington, D.C., April 14, 2021 – Today the House passed Act, S. 578/H.R.1202, otherwise known as the FASTER Act. It declares sesame the 9th major food allergen recognized by law in the United States. This means food manufacturers will have to list sesame as an allergen on food labels. Manufacturers will have until January 1, 2023 to comply. The new addition to the top allergen list is a major update the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) has been leading the fight on for years.

FASTER is an acronym for Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, and Research Act. The bill also strengthens focus on food allergy research which will help improve resources for people living with food allergies. Because the bill has already cleared the Senate, it now heads to the president's desk to be signed into law.

“This is terrific progress for our food allergy community. Adding sesame to the major allergen list is a much-needed change and a significant part of this legislation. This has been a top priority for AAFA and our Kids With Food Allergies division since 2008 and since we joined forces with the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) in 2017 to start this campaign. We’re grateful to our counterparts at Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) for spearheading efforts on the FASTER Act and supporting our recommendation to add sesame to this legislation,” said Kenneth Mendez, CEO and president of AAFA. “AAFA’s thrilled we were able to bring a variety of key food allergy groups together to support sesame labeling as we worked dual tracks with both Congress and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to add sesame to the major allergen list.”

More than 32 million Americans have food allergies. Sesame is a serious allergy for over one million people in the United States. Proper labeling makes the difference between what can be safe to consume, or pose a serious health risk.

“It takes massive effort to make massive change,” said Jenna Riemenschneider, AAFA’s director of advocacy. “This is the result of years of hard work and the power of our amazing food allergy community. We’re extremely grateful to the thousands of AAFA community members who’ve joined us by using their voices to get the FASTER Act passed. From the over 500 individual reports we collected and submitted to the FDA on allergic reactions to sesame, to the over 3,000 emails sent in the past couple weeks by our AAFA/KFA community to encourage their Congressional leadership to support this bill, there was no letting up until we got the job done. This life-changing legislation expands public health knowledge of all food allergies and makes food labels safer for people with sesame allergy.”



AAFA looks forward to seeing the FASTER Act signed into law and implemented. This victory fuels the foundation's continued work with Congress and the FDA to advance even further protections for people living with food allergies. AAFA thanks Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Steny Hoyer (D-MD) for their consistently strong leadership on this bill. A special round of thanks also goes to Senators Tim Scott (R-SC) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) for their work in moving the bill through the Senate.

To learn more about the FASTER Act and what it means for you, go to:

kidswithfoodallergies.org/faster-act

Ongoing advocacy efforts through AAFA's [Kids With Food Allergies](http://kidswithfoodallergies.org) division can be supported via secure donation here: [Support Kids With Food Allergies](http://supportkidswithfoodallergies.org). To get involved, register with AAFA's patient advocacy communities by heading to aafa.org/join and kidswithfoodallergies.org/join.

Press Contact:

Kafi Drexel Brown, Public Relations Director
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA)
Cellular: 202.974.1223
media@aafa.org

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About AAFA

Founded in 1953, AAFA is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to saving lives and reducing the burden of disease for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA offers extensive support for individuals and families affected by asthma and allergic diseases, such as food allergies and atopic dermatitis (eczema). Through its online patient support communities, network of local chapters and affiliated support groups, AAFA empowers patients and their families by providing practical, evidence-based information and community programs and services. AAFA is the only asthma and allergy patient advocacy group that is certified to meet the standards of excellence set by the National Health Council. For more information, visit www.aafa.org.