

Activists Push for GMO Labeling in Hawaii

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HONOLULU (AP) — Environmental groups are urging Hawaii lawmakers to require all genetically modified food to carry boldface labeling.

House lawmakers were debating the bill Monday, which proposes mandatory labeling of any genetically modified agricultural commodity sold in Hawaii.

Advocates say people deserve to know whether their food is genetically modified so they can make informed choices about what to buy and eat.

"I and many mothers deserve the right to know what we are feeding our children," said Jessica Mitchell, one of several parents who testified in favor of the bill.

Opponents argue the labels will drive up food costs and that there are no nutritional differences between food grown naturally and food that has been modified.

Alicia Maluafiti from the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association says requiring labeling is unfair to Hawaii residents, particularly small farmers who would be forced to comply and shoulder higher costs.

"If you pass a mandated labeling bill, you're going to force a mandatory regulatory process and a tax on consumers for 80 percent of the food that's in the supermarket," Maluafiti said. "It's not fair for every family in Hawaii that's struggling every day to put food on the table."

Community members presented conflicting scientific research supporting their opposing positions.

Labeling for genetically modified food has stirred controversy in states nationwide. A ballot measure to require labeling of genetically modified food in California was defeated last November after opponents spent \$46 million in negative advertising.

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