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March 15, 2010

Members – Iowa General Assembly
State Capitol Building
Des Moines, IA

I am writing to you concerning amendment 5207 to SF 2367 that is currently before the legislature. On behalf of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the thousands of environmental health professionals we represent, please know that we are strongly opposed to this proposed amendment. NEHA, in its seventy-three year history, has been a leader in advancing the profession and advocating strong environmental health practices that protect public health. Within this mission, there is no issue on which we have had more involvement than that of food safety.

As you know, this amendment seeks to preserve a practice being used by only a few of the *Maid Rite* franchisee's in Iowa, in which they mix raw ground beef into a mix of already cooked meat from which their sandwiches are served. There is bacteria found in raw ground beef that has the potential to "cross contaminate" the already cooked beef contained in the cooker. This practice poses a significant threat to public health in that it dramatically increases the potential for food borne illness. It is for this reason that the FDA Food Code prohibits this practice. I also would note that the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals also has prohibited this practice and required all Iowa franchise operators to comply with the FDA Food Code. The Maid Rite Corporation also supports this position, and I understand that the vast majority of Maid Rite restaurants are in compliance with this requirement.

I would also point out that beyond the significant threat to public health, allowing this practice by only a handful of operators to continue in clear violation of accepted food safety practices presents an enormous liability risk to the provider. We strongly urge you to reject what we believe to be this unnecessary and ill-conceived amendment. I thank you in advance for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely

Welford C. Roberts, REHS/RS, DAAS, PhD.
President, National Environmental Health Association



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