



The Hawaii House Committee on Health
Subject: H.R. 195, Requesting Review of Existing Reports and Studies Related to
Aspartame and Recission of Approval of Aspartame for United States Markets
April 3, 2009

Good morning, Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Nishimoto and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present comments on H.R. 195 – relating to aspartame. **The American Beverage Association (ABA) opposes this Resolution.**

The ABA is the trade association representing the non-alcoholic beverage industry. Founded in 1919, ABA represents hundreds of beverage producers, distributors, franchise companies and supporting businesses that employ more than 217,000 people across the country. The beverage companies throughout Hawaii directly employ over 500 people and indirectly impact the jobs of thousands of other across the state.

ABA members offer consumers myriad brands, flavors and packaging choices and a full range of drink options including soft drinks, diet soft drinks, ready-to-drink teas, bottled waters, water beverages, 100 percent juice, juice drinks, sports drinks and energy drinks.

Overview of low-calorie sweeteners

Low-calorie sweeteners give foods and beverages a sweet taste without the calories. Many consumers use low-calorie sweeteners to enhance the taste of food and drinks, or they purchase products prepared with low-calorie sweeteners. Low-calorie sweeteners offer consumers options to help them with their lifestyle—whether to maintain weight, help manage diabetes or simply retain sweet taste without adding calories. In fact, a 2004 consumer survey showed that 63 percent of consumers of low-calorie products are not on a diet. Staying in better overall health is rated as the number one reason for using low-calorie foods and beverages.

Proven safety of low-calorie sweeteners

Aspartame – most commonly known as NutraSweet and Equal – is one of the most thoroughly tested ingredients of all time with more than 200 scientific studies confirming its safety. It was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in food in 1981 and for soft drinks in 1983.

Since that time, aspartame has been reviewed and approved by regulatory agencies around the globe, including the European Union Scientific Committee on Food and the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization (JECFA) Expert Committee on Food Additives. In all, regulatory agencies in more than 100 countries have reviewed aspartame and found it to be safe for use.

The National Cancer Institute has also validated its safety for both over-the-counter use and use in food products. **Importantly, no link between aspartame consumption in beverages and**

cancer was found in a long-term study of almost 500,000 people by the National Cancer Institute.

Further, in 2007, an expert panel of some of the world's leading toxicologists examined more than 500 studies, articles and reports on aspartame's health effects spanning the last 25 years. The renowned experts found "no credible evidence" that aspartame is carcinogenic, neurotoxic or has any adverse health effect, even when consumed in amounts greater than the established average daily intake (ADI). These findings further support the safety of aspartame for human consumption for all populations.

Role of low-calorie sweeteners in a balanced diet

Consumer research shows that low- and reduced-calorie foods and beverages have become part of the lifestyle of millions of men and women who want to stay in better overall health, control their weight, or simply enjoy the many low- or reduced-calorie products available.

Aspartame has helped provide calorie-conscious consumers with a wide variety of good-tasting, low- and reduced-calorie products that are easily incorporated into a healthful lifestyle. Diet soft drinks are the beverage of choice for millions of Americans who are seeking to reduce their calories without having to give up their favorite soft drinks. Currently, aspartame is found in more than 6,000 products and is consumed by over 200 million people around the world.

Further, studies have shown that foods and beverages sweetened with aspartame can be an effective "tool" as part of a weight management program. Researchers at Harvard Medical School have concluded that aspartame "is a valuable adjunct to a comprehensive program of balanced diet, exercise and behavior modifications for losing weight." And a recent review of aspartame by the British Nutrition Foundation showed that a diet including foods and drinks containing aspartame was effective in maintaining or losing weight without forgoing taste.

Diet soft drinks can also help adolescents with calorie consumption and teach them the importance of balancing calories consumed with calories burned. In fact, along with the beverage industry, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, developed School Beverage Guidelines that provide for "no- or low- calories beverages with up to 10 calories/8 oz." in high schools.

Calorie reduction and sensible eating habits, in addition to regular physical activity, are essential to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Products containing low-calorie sweeteners have enabled millions of people with diabetes or people who are managing their weight to enjoy their favorite foods and beverages.

The American Diabetes Association says sugar substitutes help people who are overweight or have diabetes to reduce calories and stick to a healthy meal plan. Furthermore, the American Dietetic Association says "Non-nutritive sweeteners added to the diet have been shown to promote modest loss of weight and, within a multidisciplinary weight-control program, may facilitate long-term maintenance of reduction in body weight."

The American Beverage Association respectfully requests that the Committee hold House Resolution 195.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Individual Comment on Aspartame Resolution

HR195

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Rep. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair

Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

DATE: Friday, April 03, 2009

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 329, State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Submitted by Sally M. Belles, RD

Written Comments Only

As a Registered Dietitian and practicing health professional, I wish to respectfully comment on HR195.

In my daily practice I strive to advocate for and promote sound, science-based nutrition information to the clients I serve. I believe the health of Hawaii's citizens should improve as a result of our State Legislature's health and nutrition policy choices. A great deal of my work involves identifying and correcting food and nutrition misinformation. As written, HR195 does not accurately reflect the totality of the science and could have negative ramifications on those people in our state who rely upon low-calorie sweeteners to aid in managing their weight or health conditions.

Aspartame is a calorie-free alternative to sugar and other caloric sweeteners. Its safety has been confirmed repeatedly in peer-reviewed research, not only by health experts, scientists and government agencies in our country, but around the world. Aspartame is a simple ingredient that is made of the same components as in the foods we eat and drink each day. For persons with diabetes and any individual limiting their calorie intake for health reasons, taking away a tool that aids in this effort is not justified by scientific evidence. Individuals who feel that aspartame is not a healthy choice for them are free to make the choice not to consume aspartame or foods containing aspartame, which are clearly labeled as containing this ingredient.

I believe consumers can safely enjoy a range of nutritive and nonnutritive sweeteners when consumed as part of a healthy diet guided by current federal nutrition recommendations, such as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Dietary References Intakes. As a professional in the field of dietetics, I seek to provide consumers with science-based information about sweeteners and support research on the use of sweeteners to promote eating enjoyment, optimal nutrition and health. At present, we are facing an obesity epidemic, and it is critical that we not take away this simple tool that can help individuals manage their calorie intake.

I commend the Committee on Health for your interest in improving the health of Hawaii's citizens. I look forward to working with you to provide consumers with science-based information about the role nutritive and nonnutritive sweeteners can play in a healthy diet. Please consider me as a resource for any nutrition-related policy issues. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this resolution.

Respectfully submitted,
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April 2, 2009

To: Mr. Ryan Yamane, Chairman
Mr. Scott Nishimoto, Vice-Chairman
State of Hawaii, House of Representatives, Health Committee
Re: HR 195, Aspartame
Fr: Vance Nouchi, Hawaii Food Industry Association member, amino acid products rep.
(808) 597-6857; (808) 722-0610

Dear Mr. Yamane, Mr. Nishimoto,

Thank you very much for reviewing the following information in regards to aspartame.

- a. What is aspartame, and how it is made?
Aspartame is a simple ingredient that breaks down to compounds found in everyday foods like chicken, dairy products, fruits and vegetables. It is made from two dietary amino acids. These amino acids are two of twenty that make up all protein in our diets and in our bodies. Amino acids and dietary protein help our bodies grow, repair and operate overall. The raw material of aspartame is tapioca.
- b. How was aspartame tested for safety before it was approved for use in foods?
Aspartame was studied in both laboratory animals and people, including several specific population groups such as young children, healthy infants, lactating women, elderly people, diabetics, obese individuals, individuals with kidney disease, and individuals with behavior disorders, and people who carry the gene for PKU. Aspartame was tested in amounts many times higher than individuals would consume in the diet. **The total body of research indicated that aspartame was safe.** *
*reference: The Truth About Aspartame Fact Sheet, University of Maryland, College Park - Eastern Shore, Cooperative Extension Service
- c. FDA- "Aspartame is categorized as GRAS designation, meaning Generally Recognized as Safe"
- d. On a personal note, in reference to statements regarding the negative effects of aspartame, I would like to state that the safety of aspartame is acknowledged by many credible sources and organizations. This credibility is based on professionals with high education achievement and knowledge, performing daily lab work and research. These groups include the American Medical Association, the American Dietetic Association, the American Diabetes Association, the World Health Organization, the European Commission and food regulatory agencies in over 100 countries.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in answering your questions or in providing further information.

Best regards.
Vance Nouchi