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UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DeLAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

September 11, 2007

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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Andrew C. von Eschenbach, MD, Commissioner  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Commissioner,

I have read with great interest recent reports in the media that the FDA is currently evaluating whether popcorn consumers can develop a debilitating lung disease from inhaling diacetyl, the chemical additive used for butter flavoring in microwave popcorn. As you may remember, I wrote to you in May of this year urging you to re-examine the FDA's designation of diacetyl as "generally regarded as safe" (GRAS). As such, I am encouraged that the FDA is examining the safety of this chemical. I am writing to request specific details from you about the scope and timeline of this critical investigation. How comprehensive is your re-evaluation? When do you expect to complete it?

We already know that workers who have inhaled diacetyl have suffered from debilitating and life-threatening lung diseases. More recently, Dr. Cecile Rose, a lung specialist from Denver's National Jewish Medical and Research Center, has notified the FDA that she may have identified the first known case of a man who developed the same disease as the workers, simply by eating popcorn at home. This news follows announcements from two major producers of microwave popcorn – ConAgra Foods and Pop Weaver – stating they will no longer use diacetyl to flavor their microwave popcorn.

We cannot delay action on this matter. The FDA must pursue a comprehensive reexamination of diacetyl's potential harm to any consumer who decides to have a bag of microwave popcorn. Dr. von Eschenbach, I urge you to fully employ the FDA's regulatory mandate to protect the public.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosa L. DeLauro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

ROSA L. DeLAURO

Chairwoman,  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
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