



March 2, 2009

Senator Richard Durbin  
309 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority, I would like to express our support for the "FDA Food Safety Modernization Act." The bill, which you have introduced with Senators Alexander, Gregg, Burr, Dodd, and Kennedy, represents a bipartisan acknowledgement of a federal food safety system in need of updating.

TFAH views food safety as a fundamental component of public health, as the security of our food supply affects every household. However, the nation's food safety system is in crisis. The recent outbreak of *salmonella* in peanut butter products is only the latest illustration of a weakened food protection system plagued with serious gaps in leadership, legislative authorities, and surveillance coordination and capacity. TFAH's 2008 report, "Fixing Food Safety: Protecting America's Food Supply from Farm-to-Fork," identified major gaps in the nation's food safety system, including obsolete laws, misallocation of resources, and inconsistencies among major food safety agencies. The result is a fractionalized system focusing on antiquated threats, instead of a strategic approach to protecting the nation's food supply through state-of-the-art technologies, practices, and policies.

The "FDA Food Safety Modernization" takes several significant steps toward a reformed federal system. TFAH applauds efforts to move toward a more preventive, rather than reactive, food safety network. The legislation would help modernize FDA's archaic regulatory structure by strengthening surveillance and traceability, requiring hazard control standards in all facilities, giving the FDA more enforcement mechanisms, and increasing inspections of food facilities. We hope Congress will quickly take up these reforms, as there is wide agreement among the scientific and public health community that FDA cannot adequately protect America's food supply with existing authorities.

Sustained leadership from HHS is required to revitalize the food safety system, and drive the changes in government and industry food safety practices that are needed to restore public

confidence. We applaud your continued leadership on the issue of food safety. We look forward to working with your office on this legislation as the 111th Congress progresses.

Please feel free to contact Richard Hamburg, Director of Government Relations at (202) 223-9876 or [rhamburg@tfah.org](mailto:rhamburg@tfah.org) or Dara Alpert Lieberman at (202) 223-9870 x-20 or [dliberman@tfah.org](mailto:dliberman@tfah.org) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeffrey Levi, PhD  
Executive Director