House Bill 77: Making Pennsylvania's restaurants and other food establishments safer for customers with food allergies

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Introduced by state Rep. Arvind Venkat, D-Allegheny, and State Rep. Natalie Mihalek, R-Allegheny, House Bill 77 would require PA restaurants and other retail food establishments to display employee-information posters and provide notice to customers regarding food allergy safety. The bill passed the Pennsylvania House in February with strong bipartisan support.

House Bill 77 would **save lives** by requiring PA restaurants and other retail food facilities to **increase food allergy awareness among employees and customers.**

Nearly 33 million Americans – including 1.3 million Pennsylvanians – have food allergies that result in 200 deaths annually. Over a 13-year period, nearly half of fatal food allergy reactions were caused by food from a restaurant or other food service facility.

Allergic reactions in these settings are often caused by cross-contamination during food preparation or by the customer's failure to properly notify the staff about their allergy.

By increasing food allergy awareness, House Bill 77 could help prevent these incidents. Specifically, the bill would require PA restaurants and other retail food establishments to:

- **Display a poster in the employee area** providing information about food allergy awareness. The poster would be required to contain a description of the major food allergens, the symptoms of an allergic reaction, and any other information specified in the FDA's Food Code.

- **Include a statement on the menu or other written notice to customers** about food allergens used and **a request** that customers inform the employees serving them about any food allergies.

By requiring these simple steps, House Bill 77 could prevent many potentially fatal allergic reactions, make PA's restaurants safer and more welcoming places, and reduce the social stigma and anxiety faced by people with food allergies.

The bill has the support of the PA Restaurant and Lodging Association and the state Department of Agriculture.

Several other states – including Texas, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts – have enacted similar laws. A companion bill introduced by Sen. Judy Schwank – S.B. 107 – is in the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.