**S. 3451, the Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act of 2020**

*Introduced by Sens. Tim Scott (R-SC) and Chris Murphy (D-CT)*

*The FASTER Act helps address the growing challenges posed by food allergies, which affect tens of millions of Americans. In addition to modernizing our labeling laws by codifying sesame as a major food allergen, the bill calls for a comprehensive report on food allergies in the United States that will assist future governmental and private-sector efforts to monitor, study, and combat these allergies.*

**Background:** Approximately 32 million Americans have food allergies, including roughly one in every 13 children under the age of 18. According to the CDC, the prevalence of food allergies in children rose by 50% from 1997 to 2011. In addition to harming quality of life for tens of millions of Americans, these allergies impose high costs on families and our healthcare system as a whole. Each year in the U.S., roughly 200,000 people require emergency medical services to address allergic reactions to food, and every three minutes, an allergic reaction to food sends someone to the emergency room. Caring for children with food allergies costs American families roughly $25 billion per year.

**What the FASTER Act would do:** Specifically, the FASTER Act would:

1. Codify sesame as a major food allergen under the FD&C Act, effective for products introduced into interstate commerce on or after January 1, 2023; and
2. Direct HHS, within two years of enactment, to submit a report to Congress on opportunities and challenges related to food allergy prevention, risk reduction, cures, data collection, and diagnostic and therapeutic development. The report would also discuss a potential framework for modifying the federal list of major food allergens in the future.

**Why the FASTER Act is needed:** While the enactment of the bipartisan Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) of 2004 codified eight foods and food groups that accounted for an outsize share of allergic reactions as “major food allergens,” ensuring more transparent labeling of these ingredients, FALCPA did not list sesame.

Since the passage of FALCPA, our understanding of sesame allergen prevalence and the presence of sesame-containing products in the U.S. have both grown substantially. Recent research suggests that more than one million Americans are allergic to sesame. As former FDA Commissioner Gottlieb has noted, studies now place sesame allergies “on par with” allergies to soybeans and fish, both of which are listed as major food allergens. Particularly given that sesame is often a “hidden” ingredient, and that products containing “natural flavors” or “spices” sometimes include sesame, it is imperative that we equip American consumers with the transparent packaging needed to make safe and informed decisions.

In addition to ensuring sesame’s inclusion as a major food allergen, this legislation will help to inform future research, surveillance efforts, policymaking, and private-sector initiatives related to food allergies by producing a thorough, evidence-based report on opportunities, challenges, and areas of need.