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Re: Support for SB-187

Dear Chair Tobin, Vice Chair Stevens, and Members of the Education Committee:

Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT), a statewide environmental health and justice nonprofit organization dedicated to research and advocacy to protect public health in Alaska, the nation, and the world, would like to express our strong support of Senate Bill 187 to prohibit certain food dyes in school lunches: "An Act prohibiting certain food additives in public school meals; and providing for an effective date."

Food dyes targeted in Senate Bill 187 include red dye 3, red dye 40, yellow dye 5, yellow dye 6, blue dye 1 and blue dye 2. These are synthetic non-nutritional colorant additives used to impart colors to foods, medicines, self-care products, candy, and other products. These are often derived from petroleum and other substances.

"Three dyes (Red 40, Yellow 5, and Yellow 6) have been found to be contaminated with benzidine or other carcinogens. At least four dyes (Blue 1, Red 40, Yellow 5, and Yellow 6) cause hypersensitivity reactions. Numerous microbiological and rodent studies of Yellow 5 were positive for genotoxicity." These dyes have also been linked to behavioral issuesⁱ such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Hyperactive Deficit Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.ⁱⁱ These dyes are associated with increased inflammation of the digestive system, increasing the risk of colorectal cancer, gut biome disorders, and damage to DNA.ⁱⁱⁱ They are also linked to memory deficits, ability to learn and retain information, as well as difficulty following multiple step instructions.^{iv}

Exposure to these non-nutritive, synthetic food colorants may begin *in utero*, as these chemicals can enter the mother's blood and pass through the placenta. This can cause neurodevelopmental problems and future negative neurological behaviors later in life.^v Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to harmful exposures to food additive chemicals because their brains and nervous systems are rapidly developing, making them more easily damaged by toxic chemicals. These harmful exposures are preventable. Exposure to these toxic food dyes for no reason other than aesthetics is detrimental to children's growth and development.

In conclusion, ACAT strongly supports SB 187, and we encourage legislators to support this

bill. Our information is included below, and we welcome further dialogue.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ Sarah Koylewski, Michael F Jacobson. 2012. Toxicology of Food Dyes. *Int J Occup Environ Health* 18(3):220-46. DOI 10.1179/1077352512Z.00000000034. PMID: 23026007

ⁱⁱ Mark D. Miller, Craig Stenmaus, Mari S Golub, Rosemary Castorina, Ruwan Thilakartne, Asa Bradman, Menalie A Marty. 2022. Potential impacts of synthetic food dyes on activity and attention in children: a review of human and animal evidence. *Environ Health*. 21:45 DOI 10.1186/s12940-022-00849-9. PMID: 35484553.

ⁱⁱⁱ Qi Zhang, Alexander A Chumanevich, Ivy Nguyen, Anastasiya A Chumanevich, Nora Sartawi, Jake Hogan, Minou Khazan, Quinn Harris, Bryson Massey, Loulia Chatzistamou, Phillip J Buckhaults, Carolyn E Banister, Michael Wirth, James R Herbert, E Angela Murphy, Lorne J Hofseth. 2023. The synthetic food dye, Red 40, causes DNA damage, causes colonic inflammation, and impacts the microbiome of mice. *Toxicol Rep*. 11:221-232. DOI: 10.1016/j.toxrep.2023.08.006 PMID: 37719200

^{iv} Mark D. Miller, Craig Stenmaus, Mari S Golub, Rosemary Castorina, Ruwan Thilakartne, Asa Bradman, Menalie A Marty. 2022. Potential impacts of synthetic food dyes on activity and attention in children: a review of human and animal evidence. *Environ Health*. 21:45 DOI 10.1186/s12940-022-00849-9. PMID: 35484553.

v Vasantha Padmanabhan, Almudena Veiga-Lopez. 2025. Mother, Placenta, and fetal health: endocrine disrupting chemicals at play. *Mol Cell Endocrinol.* 579:111100. DOI 10.1016/j.mce.2023.112100. PMID: 37866409