

July 17, 2012

Dear President Obama,

We applauded when you spoke in 2009 as both a father and the President, emphasizing that “[a]t a bare minimum, we should be able to count on our government keeping our kids safe when they eat peanut butter.”

We were enthusiastic when you promised in a March 2009 radio address to work vigorously for strong food safety measures, noting “no parent should have to worry that their child is going to get sick from their lunch,” and that, “many of the laws and regulations governing food safety in America have not been updated since they were written in the time of Teddy Roosevelt.”

We were then elated when, less than two years later, you signed into law the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) – passed by Congress with bipartisan and industry support – which promised real action to better protect the public from preventable foodborne illnesses.

However, we are now concerned and deeply disappointed because crucial food-safety protection proposals that would give life to FSMA have been languishing in White House review for more than six months, well after they were supposed to be issued under the new law. We remain puzzled by your Administration’s failure to put in place these important protections that you so strongly supported.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that one in six Americans (48 million people) suffer from a foodborne illness each year, resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.

Americans will continue to get sick and even die from foodborne disease as your Administration continues to hold up the food safety rules. In fact, the U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) essentially ensured such an outcome in a recent letter to food industry representatives. In it, the FDA said that until final rules are issued, the agency would not enforce the FSMA requirements that food processors adopt prevention-based protections, and that importers assure the safety of the food products they send to the United States.

On behalf of those whose lives have been directly impacted by foodborne illness and others who may be unfortunately impacted in the future, as well as for all of the consumer, public health and victim organizations that worked tirelessly to get FSMA enacted, we are writing to tell you respectfully that we cannot wait any longer. Please allow the promise of this landmark law to become a reality now, by releasing the long-delayed proposed rules.

Sincerely,

Family of Kyle Allgood
Chubbuck, ID

Michael Ayers
Denver, NC

Dana Dziadul
Viera, FL

Rylee Gustafson
Henderson, NV

Family of Nellie Napier
Medina, OH

Family of Ruby Trautz
Bellvue, NE

