



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Assemblymember Quirk Introduces Bill to Increase Transparency in Over-The-Counter Probiotics

SACRAMENTO – Assemblymember Bill Quirk (D-Hayward) has introduced legislation that will improve labeling standards for dietary supplements containing live microorganisms, also referred to as over-the-counter (OTC) probiotics.

“It is important that consumers know exactly which and how many microorganisms they're consuming,” explained Assemblymember Quirk, “We cannot expect these products to be labeled consistently without standardization.”

Operating under limited federal guidance, probiotics manufacturers currently label live microorganisms using varying levels of specificity. However, because different microbial strains can have different effects, strain identification is important for substantiating claims and ensuring the integrity of a probiotic. In addition, federal law mandates that OTC probiotics be quantified by weight, which provides little information regarding the quantity of live microorganisms in a product.

AB 1178 will address labeling inconsistencies by requiring that live microorganisms in OTC probiotics be identified with strain-level specificity and labeled with a metric that reflects the number of viable microorganisms.

The idea behind this bill came from Eric Lee, a doctoral student in the Graduate Program of Infectious Diseases and Immunity at the University of California at Berkeley, as part of the University of California Center Sacramento’s inaugural STEM Solutions in Public Policy Award Competition. This program, according to Dr. Richard Kravitz, Director of the UC Center Sacramento, “gives the UC’s talented doctoral students in science, technology, engineering, and math the opportunity to make a difference by translating their technical knowledge into ideas for new California legislation. This furthers a core mission of UC Center Sacramento: to share knowledge in the interest of better, more evidence-based public policymaking in California.”

“If this bill passes, I believe that it will help protect the health of all Californians, and bring some clarity to the murky world of probiotics,” said Mr. Lee, “I also hope that this competition's success will

encourage more California legislators to engage with scientists in their districts as a source of ideas, and novel perspectives, on policy for our state.”

“As a scientist turned policymaker myself,” said Assemblymember Quirk, “I was thrilled to learn about the UC Center Sacramento’s STEM Solutions program and look forward to working with Mr. Lee as AB 1178 moves through the legislative process.”

AB 1178 has not been referred to policy committee.

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Elected in 2012, Bill Quirk brings his PhD in astrophysics and career as an educator and scientist to the State Assembly. He is the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials. He is also the Chair of the Select Committee on California’s Clean Energy Economy. He is a member of the Agriculture, Public Safety, Revenue and Taxation, and Utilities and Energy Committees.

Website of Assemblymember Quirk: <https://a20.asmdc.org/>