

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2244 (Gabriel) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee: Health

Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), no later than June 1, 2028, to accredit certification agents to certify products as “Non-Ultraprocessed Certified.” The bill also requires CDPH to create a specified standardized “Non-Ultraprocessed Certified” seal and allows a person to use the seal on a product only if the product has been certified by an accredited certification agent. This bill also requires a food facility with gross annual store sales of more than \$10 million to prominently display, as defined, at least three “Non-Ultraprocessed Certified” items if the food facility offers for sale more than 25 certified items. The bill authorizes CDPH, public attorneys, and private entities to enjoin a food facility that fails to meet the display requirements.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

Costs to CDPH of an unknown amount, potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars or more, one-time, to develop a process and standards for accrediting certification agents to certify products as “Non-Ultraprocessed Certified,” create a seal, and possibly adopt regulations. CDPH would also incur ongoing costs, possibly low hundreds of thousands of dollars per year, to maintain the accreditation program (General Fund).

The Department of Justice anticipates no costs associated with this bill. However, this bill allows private entities to enjoin a food facility that does not meet the display requirements in this bill, creating potential cost pressures to the courts of an unknown amount to adjudicate any additional filings. Actual costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded based on workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The state budget provides annual General Fund backfills to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately \$117.3 million in 2025-26.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

**COMMENTS:**

1) **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by Environmental Working Group. According to the author:

This bill would establish a “Not Ultraprocessed” seal that food manufacturers could place on products that meet clear standards for not being ultra-processed. Modeled after the “USDA Organic” label, the seal would provide consumers with a simple, trustworthy way to identify healthier options with a quick glance.

This bill would require grocery stores in California to feature products bearing the seal in a prominent, high-traffic area of the store, thereby making it easier for busy families to locate healthier foods quickly and conveniently. The author concludes that ultimately, parents shouldn’t need a Ph.D. to understand what they’re feeding their kids, and this bill will empower consumers with clear, trustworthy information and make it easier for them to find foods that are free from harmful additives.

- 2) **Background.** The NOVA classification system characterizes foods based on their level of industrial processing, with four categories ranging from unprocessed/minimally processed foods to ultraprocessed food (UPF). The UPF category is characterized by food products that are formulations of ingredients, mostly of exclusive industrial use, that result from a series of industrial processes. Common examples of UPFs include confectionery, sodas, packaged breads and reconstituted meat products such as hot dogs.

A 2024 article published in the scientific journal *Foods* notes that UPF consumption correlates with adverse health outcomes, including but not limited to overweight, obesity, and hypertension and insulin resistance. The article further states that UPFs, prevalent in modern diets, contribute to nutritional deficiencies and excessive caloric intake, exacerbating obesity rates. Lifestyle factors such as busy schedules and quick meal management further drive UPF consumption, disrupting hunger regulation and promoting overeating.

The Environmental Working Group, the sponsors of this bill cite a 2025 report from the Food Integrity Collective and Linkage Research that found that 72% of Americans are trying to reduce their UPF intake, yet fewer than half could correctly identify common ultra-processed products.

An article published on the University of Georgia’s website highlighted research on sales of yogurt sold by stores that had adopted NuVal labels (which assigned scores describing the healthfulness of a product) and found that retailers increased prices for healthier products (products with higher NuVal scores).

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