

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1048  
Health

(Delegate Shetty, *et al.*)

Finance

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Public Health - Chain Restaurants - Sodium and Added Sugars Warning Icons  
and Disclosure and Notice

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This bill requires each “chain restaurant,” beginning January 1, 2027, to display on each menu or menu board (1) alongside each “standard menu item” with at least 1,150 milligrams or more of sodium per serving or at least 25 grams of added sugar per serving, respectively, a “high sodium content” or “high added sugars content” warning icon and related text; and (2) a written disclosure and notice to customers that standard menu items may contain high sodium or high sugar and full nutritional information is available through a QR Code, online, or by request. By January 1, 2027, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must adopt regulations to (1) establish a high sodium content warning icon, high added sugars content warning icon, and accompanying text; (2) establish a minimum size for each warning icon that is at least as large as the largest text character used in the name of the menu item alongside which the icon will be displayed; and (3) implement the bill. Concurrent with the adoption of regulations, MDH must publish guidance on its website that details the purpose of the bill and how a restaurant may comply. During calendar 2027, MDH must direct chain restaurants to its website for this guidance. The bill also establishes penalties for violations. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** MDH can adopt regulations, train local health department (LHD) inspectors, and direct restaurants to its website using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** LHDs can inspect chain restaurants’ menus during the standard inspection process using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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## Analysis

### Bill Summary:

#### *Definitions*

“Chain restaurant” means a food service facility that is (1) part of a chain with 20 or more locations doing business under the same name, regardless of ownership structure, and offering for sale substantially similar menu items and (2) subject to specified federal labeling requirements.

“High added sugars content” means 25 grams or more of added sugars per serving. “High sodium content” means 1,150 milligrams or more of sodium per serving.

“Standard menu item” means a food or beverage item that is listed on a menu or menu board. It does not include a food or beverage item that appears on a menu or menu board for less than 60 calendar days per year.

#### *Icons, Accompanying Text, and Written Disclosure*

For a high sodium content warning, the following text must be prominently, clearly, and conspicuously displayed at the point of selection: “The high sodium content warning icon indicates a menu item with a sodium (salt) content that exceeds half the total daily recommended limit. Diets higher in sodium are associated with an increased risk of developing high blood pressure, which is a major cause of heart disease and stroke.”

For a high added sugars content warning, the following text must be prominently, clearly, and conspicuously displayed at the point of selection: “The high added sugars content warning icon indicates a menu item with sugar content that exceeds half the total daily recommended limit. Diets with higher amounts of added sugars over time may increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes, weight gain, and tooth decay.”

A chain restaurant may comply with the written disclosure requirement by making the full nutritional information of the food or beverage item available (1) through use of a QR code that links to the restaurant’s online nutritional information and (2) on request of a customer, in any printed format.

## *Penalties*

A person who violates the bill is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to: (1) for a first offense, a fine of up to \$500, and (2) for a subsequent offense, a fine of up to \$1,000.

**Current Law:** “Food service facility” means (1) a place where food or drink is prepared for sale or service on the premises or elsewhere or (2) any operation where food is served to or provided for the public, with or without charge.

A food establishment other than a cottage food business that violates any provision of Subtitle 3 of the Health-General Article is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to (1) for a first offense, a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 90 days and (2) for a second offense, a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or imprisonment for up to one year. The food establishment is also liable for a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 and may be enjoined from continuing the violation.

Chapters 251 and 252 of 2013 require food establishments to display a poster related to food allergies, as designed and made available by MDH. There are currently no State or federal laws requiring food establishments to display warnings of high added sugar or sodium content.

Under federal law (21 U.S.C. § 343), a restaurant or similar food establishment that is part of a chain with at least 20 locations must generally disclose in a clear and conspicuous manner, either on the menu board or adjacent to the name of the standard menu item, (1) the number of calories in a standard menu item and (2) based on suggested daily caloric intake and in the context of a total daily diet, the significance of the caloric information provided on the menu.

**Small Business Effect:** To the extent a chain restaurant is owned by a small business franchisee, they must comply with the bill or be subject to penalties for noncompliance.

**Additional Comments:** The cities of Philadelphia and New York City both require chain restaurants to include sodium warnings on menu items that contain more than the adult daily value (2,300 milligrams) of sodium. New York City also requires chain restaurants to include an icon on their menus next to any item that contains at least 50 grams or more of added sugars.

## Additional Information

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 866 (Senator A. Washington) - Finance.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 23, 2026  
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