

My name is Ricardo Corona. I'm very happy that I am alive and able to be here to testify about this important bill. I live in southern California and came up just to talk today about why SB 193 is so important.

If California could find out that my company had a chemical that could kill or seriously injure its employees, I might never have gotten sick. And I would not have a lung transplant.

I was healthy before I started working at Carmi in February 2006. Carmi makes food flavorings for bakeries and other food companies.

My job was to make a butter flavoring that was sold to other food companies.

I was exposed to a lot of dust and powder.

When I worked I got those things in my lungs.

And when I worked harder lifting things or working quickly, I got more.

I was not given a mask. The dust was very bad. There were no fans or ventilation to keep down the dust.

After a short while, I had trouble catching my breath. It was like I had been running all the time. I coughed and wheezed.

When I first went to the doctor, I was told I had asthma. They gave me an inhaler.

But the asthma medicine didn't work.

The doctor didn't know why.

And at that time my employer didn't know that the toxic chemical I worked with was causing permanent damage to my lungs. The label didn't have any warnings on it. The Safety Data Sheet didn't have up to date information.

So my boss did not warn me about the very bad effect this butter flavoring chemical would have on my lungs.

I didn't get any training. I didn't know that my problem was related to my work.

It was only after I became ill that I learned that the butter chemical I worked with was caused my lung problems.

But by then it was too late.

I had lost almost all my ability to breathe. The doctors said I lost 80% of my lung capacity. They could not make me better.

I needed a lung transplant to live.

They took me off work and got me on the lung transplant list at UCLA.

And I was lucky enough to get a lung transplant about 2 years ago.

After my lungs were removed, the UCLA doctors looked at them. They reported my small airways were gone. They said I had a very severe case of the disease - it is hard to pronounce - called bronchiolitis obliterans.

I am now living on borrowed time.

I was only exposed for maybe 5 months until July 2006. It was really fast.

If my boss and the workers in our company had been told right away that the butter flavoring chemical was dangerous, I would not be sitting here today with a transplanted lung.

I hope no one else ever needs to go through what I did.

Workers like me need SB193 so we can get the right information from our employers when the California Health Department learns about a new serious problem that can threaten our health or life. The Health Department has to be able to reach our company. That means they have to be able to know where a bad chemical is located in California.

SB 193 could have kept me from becoming ill from the butter chemical. The Health Department not only could contact my employer and give us information, but also it could have contacted doctors too and let them know that when they see certain symptoms, they should check with the patient about what they are exposed to at work. I could have gotten information from my employer or from my doctor about how to be protected.

I'm not the only one at my work who got sick.

My co-worker Irma Ortiz also became ill and is awaiting a lung transplant. I hope she gets one.

Our medical cases were reported in the medical literature. Irma was reported as the "index" case of the disease in the Southern California flavoring industry. I was reported to have the most rapid onset of the disease in the world.

Before I close, please allow me to tell you about my friend and former co-worker Irma Ortiz who came to the last hearing but could not make the trip today.

She can barely speak because even a few words makes her very short of breath. So I want to explain her situation too.



Irma is 50. She worked at Carmi much longer than I did – for 8 years from 1997 to 2005.

Right now, she is waiting for a lung transplant at UCLA Medical Center.

By 2005 – a couple of months **before** I got hired on at Carmi, Irma had already lost about 75% of her lungs from the butter flavoring chemical. And it was only after she got sick that she also learned she had the same disease I had from the same toxic chemical.

Irma married her long-time friend, Victor Mancilla, who gave up his career to care for her.

I hope they find a lung for her and that she gets to live.

In closing, let me say: We both have a very strong will to live. As I said, I'm on borrowed time, but doing pretty good. Irma is not doing as well.

I just don't want others to die or be seriously injured when our government knows that something is dangerous. Our health department should be able to find out where in California a dangerous chemical is being used.

If they find out where the chemical is going here in California, the Health Department can find us before we find ourselves in the hospital.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.