

I'm a registered dietitian and work at the Salem hospital. I was a supervisor for nutrition services in the kitchen for 1.5 years, and now a clinical inpatient dietitian. I can tell you from experience that patients will be very upset if they cannot get their "processed meat." The hospital is a place of healing. Sometimes, that includes eating sausage or a turkey sandwich. There are a variety of patients seen in the hospital from healthy moms who just gave birth and need the extra calories to provide for their newborn, to malnourished patients who also need extra calories to gain weight back or at the least stop losing weight.

At our hospital we strive to have the best options for all of our patients. Processed meats may not be the most "healthy" option, but the best part about living a healthy life style is eating the fruits, veggies, whole grains, AND enjoying the fatty salty foods that everyone loves. It's all about moderation, and eating a balanced diet. There are some people who eat sausage all the time and are perfectly healthy. If someone has heart disease, their sodium and fat totals are monitored. The best part about that the way diets are monitored in the Hospital setting, is that patients still have the freedom to eat what they want, but also still learning how that fits into the diet plan they should be following outside of the hospital.

Any responsible facility is going to do their best to offer a variety of foods. That includes plant-based and processed foods. Imagine having cancer, going through treatments that make foods taste completely different and all you want is a turkey sandwich just like your mom made or bacon for breakfast.

This bill sounds nice in theory. Before I became a registered dietitian, and knew how complicated nutrition was, I would have thought this was a good idea too. In reality though, and I've seen it in real life more often than not, humans are going to eat whatever want. They will complain and give management an ear full if they can't get what they want. The best we can do is help educate patients, residents, people in general how to balance it all. Telling them "no" will only make them go overboard once they can get it, or have a family members bring it into them. It's like telling a toddler they can't have a toy, it leads them to cry and scream until they get their way.

Passing this bill will cause more of a divide between patients and hating where they are at. Please consider that we are all human and should be able to choose what we eat. It takes a lot more to change someone's eating habits than restricting them from eating bacon for 3 days in the hospital. Please give them the option.