Viewpoint: Some Republican-governed states want to ban or limit sales of cell-cultivated meat. Here’s why that’s a bad idea

At the end of January, Florida’s House and the Senate Agriculture Committee approved a bill introduced by Republican Rep. Danny Alvarez that would not only ban the production and sale of cell-cultivated meat, but would make it a second-degree misdemeanor. If the bill is passed by the state Senate, effective this summer the culinary crime would be punishable with a fine of up to $1,000, plus suspension or closure of the restaurant, store, or other business in question. Similarly, Arizona Republican Rep. David Marshall proposed a bill on Jan. 16 banning the sale of cell-cultivated meat. The bill would also allow Arizona business owners to sue cell-cultivated meat companies for damages to their profits.

The politicians behind these sorts of preemptive measures, however, are betraying a number of American—and especially Republican—values.

For one thing, the labeling laws are, arguably, methods of arresting free speech. They don’t actually protect consumers from dangerous or even misunderstood products, they just make a whole category of demonstrably safe food a little harder to sell. Attempts to flat-out ban cell-cultivated meat are even worse, taking away consumers’ rights to use their own judgement and freedom of choice in deciding how to feed their families.

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