

February 2024

TESTIMONY FOR BILL HB0739

Requiring the Maryland Department of Health to develop a publicly accessible list of diet pills

Dear Members of the Maryland House,

My name is Arshia Verma, and I am a sophomore in college. I grew up in Elkridge, Maryland in Howard County and this bill is deeply important to me because it will protect the health of countless youth in Maryland by creating a list of over-the-counter diet pills accessible to the public. I implore you to vote in favor of this bill that will protect your young and impressionable constituents.

As a 19-year-old girl, I understand the heavy influence of social media, marketing, and beauty standards on adolescents. I have seen my friends create social media accounts as early as the age of 11, and quickly get addicted to scrolling through the pervasive image of influencers and models showcasing their skinny physiques. Most adults know these images are often heavily edited, with skin airbrushed and waists pinched. Kids, however, often fail to realize this and spend countless hours idolizing these influencers, which was the case with my friends. What started as fangirling over posts of these beautiful women became something more dangerous, as my friends in middle school started altering their lifestyles to look just as skinny. I watched as my friends fell into the trap of diet pills to achieve the unattainable body type that these models were promoting. However, the consequences of their actions were far less glamorous. They suffered from side effects like dizziness, even just going up the stairs at school, and severe hair loss. Even still, they couldn't stop their disordered eating and diet pill usage because their desire to obtain a model-like physique outweighed the physical toll of their actions. In the midst of this distressing reality, as our generation grows up with neverending advertisements for diet pills on every corner of the internet, it is becoming harder and harder to escape the beauty ideals that we are expected to meet.

These diet pills are extremely under-regulated by the FDA and often contain harmful ingredients including banned pharmaceuticals, pesticides, steroids, and other harmful toxins. With the widespread sale of these diet pills at trusted pharmacies and local corner stores, it is all too easy for kids to blindly purchase these supplements without understanding the potential health consequences associated with these products. Developing a list of diet pills that is accessible to consumers is a vital first step in protecting the health of Maryland youth.

To serve in the state youth's best interest, I strongly urge you to vote in support of HB0739.

Thank you,
Arshia Verma