

House Health and Government Operations Committee
HB 739 - Maryland Department of Health - List of Diet Pills (Weight Loss Supplement Identification)

Letter of Information

February 28, 2024

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding HB 739. The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN)¹ has appreciated the dialogue with the sponsor and his staff on this legislation; however, we would like to provide the following information on dietary supplements as the committee considers the bill.

CRN wholeheartedly supports transparency in the dietary supplement marketplace and has supported [federal measures](#)² to achieve this in the past. CRN continues to express strong support for federal legislation to would create a mandatory registry of dietary supplements sold marketed in the U.S.—*all* supplements, not just those for any particular indication. We do have concerns that HB 739 may miss the mark on actually offering any additional protection to consumers, especially young people, from illicit products marketed as dietary supplements.

Even as we work for a federally-mandated registry, CRN has created and maintains a [public database](#)³ where we require our member companies to list their products and labels. This database, known as [The Supplement OWL](#) (Online Wellness Library), is an industry-wide, self-regulatory initiative that creates a snapshot of the legitimate supplement marketplace for consumers, businesses, and regulators. It serves as resource for these audiences to identify products, their ingredients and the companies who market them, and permit registry users to examine and evaluate labels and other product information. CRN welcomes non-members to include their products as well. *The Supplement OWL* provides supplement manufacturers with a platform to be transparent about their products. Consumers can see exactly what is in the supplements they are taking and can access information about the supplement manufacturer.

Hb739 calls for Maryland’s Department of Health to assemble its own list of "over the counter diet pills sold in the state." CRN fears that precious state budget resources will go to creating a list of dietary supplements that ultimately finds and captures only safe products like those made by our members, a listing of legitimate products not unlike the ones in our Supplement OWL. Alternatively, the Department might expend considerable time and resources researching the bad actors and illegal products sold from the dark corners of the internet, only to publish that list and provide a public roadmap for anyone hoping for a “quick fix” in their weight loss journey or anyone seeking out illegal substances. To include such products on a list of “weight loss pills” only gives them unintended legitimacy and respectability.

¹ CRN - The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), founded in 1973, is a Washington, D.C.-based trade association representing 150+ dietary supplement and functional food manufacturers, ingredient suppliers, and companies providing services to those manufacturers and suppliers. In addition to complying with a host of federal and state regulations governing dietary supplements and food in the areas of manufacturing, marketing, quality control and safety, our manufacturer and supplier members also agree to adhere to additional voluntary guidelines as well as to CRN’s Code of Ethics. Visit www.crnusa.org.

² S.4090 - Dietary Supplement Listing Act of 2022 - <https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/s4090/BILLS-117s4090is.pdf>

³ The Supplement Owl - <https://supplementowl.org/>

⁴ Eating Disorders and Dietary Supplements: A Review of the Science - <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/15/9/2076>

As the bill targets “diet pills,” it's important to note that while the prevalence of eating disorders and body dysmorphia in the United States is a crisis that must be addressed, there is no credible scientific data that the products identified in this bill lead to nor cause body dysmorphia, eating disorders, or mental health issues. A [2023 peer-reviewed study](#)⁴ that examines the complex and multifaceted risk factors associated with eating disorders and body dysmorphia did not find a causal relationship between the use of dietary supplements and the onset of these conditions whatsoever.

We look forward to continuing constructive discussions with the sponsor and this committee in the hope that legislation can be developed that addresses the very real concerns over eating disorders among young people while also preserving the right of Maryland consumers of all ages to have access to legitimate dietary supplement products.

Thank you again for your time and consideration of CRN’s comments on HB 739.

Sincerely,



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cc: Natasha Mehu, Manis Canning & Associates