

Good afternoon members of Maryland's Health Government Operations committee,

My name is Pari Patel and I am a college student and resident of Hagerstown, Maryland here to share my personal story about the dangers of over-the-counter diet pills.

I was exposed to supplements at the age of 14, and as a competitive athlete, I turned to over-the-counter diet pills as a way to see immediate results.

During this period of struggle, I went to my local grocery store and saw aisles and aisles of various types of supplements. I decided to try a version of every diet pill on the shelves. Unfortunately, no one was there to speak to me about the dangers of these products, and my friends, coaches, and teammates even recommended the use of these supplements. Was everyone sucked into this whirlwind of marketing hype and deception?

With no prior experience in this realm, the only source of information I had was the internet which too was severely biased and exaggerated the benefits of supplements greatly. Finally through deep research, I eventually realized these supplements might be dangerous. But still, it was hard for me to believe because I so firmly trusted that our government would not let dangerous products like these be sold to me. I was convinced that our government would put a stop to this if these supplements were truly bad.

It took me over four years to overcome the consequences from these diet pills and completely get over my disordered eating. And to think, it took me only about three weeks to develop a severe sickness from these supplements. My story is one of millions. But this begs the question, how do we expect teens to understand the negative effects of these drugs? Are we going to let them get sucked into this whirlwind of deception too because in every case and scenario, the results are dreadful. It pains me to even think of the possibilities of another teen being deceived by these companies to unknowingly take risks with their health.

These products are often dangerous and can lead to serious health consequences, as was the case with me. Letting these supplements go unregulated means taking away the immense potential in each of these young teens at an early age, setting them up for lifelong pain and difficulty. The consequences of using these supplements are not easy to recover from.

It is time for our government to take action create a list of diet pills that is accessible for consumers is a vital first step in protecting the health of Maryland youth. We need legislation that will protect our youth from the predatory practices of the supplement industry. This bill has been introduced in New York, California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. We must prioritize the health and well-being of our young people and ensure that they are not being misled and put at risk by these harmful products.

