

My name is Sarah Cheng, and I am a high school senior, as well as a member of the STRIPED Youth Corps.

I am writing in strong support of Maryland's House bill HB0739. This important legislation aims to restrict the sale of over-the-counter diet pills and weight-loss supplements. The weight-loss industry has experienced great surges in revenue as well as popularity, and we see more advertisements and promotions of these dangerous products every single day. However, little is known about the safety and efficacy of these products, yet users are promised to achieve an unattainable ideal physique. Paired with the unsustainable standards regarding body image and weight loss that permeate our society, these supplements can serve as a gateway to the development of an eating disorder.

As a young adult almost finishing high school, it's hard to forget how my relationship with my body has impacted me. During the pandemic, I became obsessed with how I looked as my relationship with my body became more and more negative, eventually leading to the development of my eating disorder. Just 14 years old at the time, I desired to change my body to fit a certain image that I, along with many young people affected by these same issues, had deemed fit and beautiful. However, in reality, these rigid expectations are harmful and should not be the accepted standard for defining one's beauty or worth. Social media and the internet further fueled my efforts to accomplish this goal to change the way I looked, and the great amount of promotion for weight loss and becoming lean or fit trapped me in this cycle.

Dietary supplements sold for weight loss and the weight-loss industry play a critical role in exacerbating negative body image and destructive expectations that many children and young adults are drawn to. The passage of this legislation would call for greater regulation of an industry that has become increasingly predatory towards children. By increasing transparency and safety through the creation of an accessible list of diet pills for consumers, we can work towards more body positivity and acceptance, eating disorder prevention, and greater protection of children's health.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns.

Please vote for HB0739 to make a difference in protecting the children of Maryland.