

Dear Honorable Members of the California Legislature,

My name is Riley Ramseier, and I am a 16-year-old from Fresno, California where I currently attend University High School. On top of my rigorous schooling, I am a teen athlete and a member of a competitive rock climbing team. Testifying through my involvement with the STRIPED Youth Corps Policy Translation Team, I am here today to share my story and to communicate my support of Assembly Bill HB634.

As a teenager going through the difficult phases of life, I have observed the effects of negative body image on numerous others around me, as well as experienced it firsthand. At the age of 13, I developed an eating disorder, and can recall the feelings of exhaustion and helplessness I experienced as I struggled through it. I know what it is like to yearn for the perfect body and recognize the lengths to which teens will go to achieve this. While I did not resort to diet pills and weight loss supplements, it is terrifying how many people do, and for the wrong reasons. Teens like me have the ability to obtain these unrestricted products with great ease since they can be found readily at your local Walgreens or Target, and can even be bought online through Amazon. One could easily purchase these products to use at their own discretion without anyone stopping them.

As an athlete, talk of weight loss supplements and diet pills is even more prevalent in my daily life. Teens like me with great fitness aspirations will oftentimes look for the easiest route to achieve their goals. Unfortunately, diet pills and weight loss supplements are readily available to them and on the surface, they look like the quickest fix. In reality, these supplements and pills can result in poor side effects when used irresponsibly. Teens who are not properly educated on the effects of supplements can cause permanent damage to their bodies.

While these dietary supplements deceptively claim to promote healthy weight loss, many of them have been found to contain prescription drugs, banned substances, and stimulants which can be very dangerous for unsuspecting users. Due to the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, manufacturers are not required to prove the safety of the supplement they are producing, nor is the accuracy of the label regulated. With the lack of regulation in place, these pills pose more of a threat than one may think.

The companies who create these products deliberately target the younger generations by placing ads on social media platforms commonly used by teens. Once a teen gets hooked on one of these easily obtainable products, who knows how many others will also get peer pressured into experimenting with them as well. This is why I urge you all, dedicated lawmakers, to vote in support of Bill HB634. If this bill is passed, thousands of young people like me would be protected against the potentially harmful effects of weight loss supplements and diet pills. Us teens need your help.

Thank you all for your time and support on this pressing matter,
Riley Ramseier