

Testimony

Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland State Legislature,

My name is Taline Nahapetian, and I am a 16-year-old youth from Pasadena, California, where I currently attend Holy Martyrs Ferrahian High School. I am here today to share my personal story and advocate for the many youths who strongly support House Bill 634.

As a current teenager, I am well acquainted with concerns over the state of my body, my weight, and how my emotions vary day to day as a result of issues concerning my body. As a result of societal pressures, I developed an eating disorder at thirteen. Similar to my circumstance, I grew to learn that my family members and friends underwent similar experiences, that being the essential need to lose weight and “fit into” the body standards set by society's elite. After learning and beginning to implement calorie deficits, low-carb diets, and intense exercise regimens, I turned to aisle fourteen at my local CVS, which sold diet and weight loss supplements. I recall telling my parents I would be going for a bike ride when, in actuality, I rode my pink bike to the local pharmacy, where I began to analyze each and every little white bottle along aisle 14, which contained the pills that would support “fat loss,” “weight loss,” and “appetite suppression.” I purchased a bottle of Lipozene, an over-the-counter weight loss drug that contains a soluble fiber called glucomannan; this fiber absorbs water to create a thick gel and further aid in weight loss. As I walked up to the checkout counter, no pharmacist, parent, clerk, or physician could stop my actions that, in the future, would harm my physiological and psychological health.

In addition to Lipozene, a plethora of chemically toxic and harmful weight loss drinks, powders, and pills are easily accessible to the youth in everyday pharmacies and markets. By preying on the insecurities and low-self esteem of teenagers, these companies deliberately take advantage of the impressionable youth and seek profits out of the falsely promised claims that their products advertise.

Opposing firms claim these pills do not contribute nor correlate with eating disorders and mental illness; however, the research-based evidence proves otherwise. These pills target the portion of the demographic that struggles with body image, eating habits, and relationships with themselves. These pills contribute to and directly intensify the development of eating disorders and depression!

If Bill No. 634 were to be passed, it would limit the availability and widespread consumption of dangerous diet pills and related supplements. Teenagers nationwide, including myself and my peers, would be protected from using diet pills and potentially developing eating disorders and related issues. As a recent recoveree from an eating disorder, I urge the Maryland legislation to vote for the protection of our youth against the weight loss/diet propaganda that is being fed into the minds of the youth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Taline Nahapetian