



TO: The Honorable C. T. Wilson, Chair
Members, House Economic Matters Committee
The Honorable Joe Vogel

FROM: Christine K. Krone
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RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 634 – *Public Health – Sale of Diet Pills to Minors – Prohibition (Protecting Teenagers From Unregulated Diet Pills)*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 634.

House Bill 634 would establish prohibitions and requirements regarding the sale of diet pills to individuals under 18 years old. Dietary supplements are classified by the Food and Drug Administration as food and, therefore, don't undergo scientific and safety testing like prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications do. These products are unregulated and easily accessible. "Study after study has documented that, particularly, supplements sold for weight loss and muscle building are often laced with dangerous and illegal ingredients, including banned and undisclosed pharmaceuticals, anabolic steroids, and experimental and excessive stimulants. The American Academy of Pediatrics has strongly cautioned against teens using these products for any reason," said Dr. S. Bryn Austin, Professor at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, whose research is focused on eating disorders¹. A good example of the presence of excessive stimulants, such as those found in muscle-building supplements, contain extremely high levels of caffeine, typically 250-300mg per dose. To put it in perspective, an 8oz cup of coffee has about 95mg of caffeine. The dangers of diet pills can also be magnified when taking them in conjunction with prescribed or over the counter medications.

Youth who struggle with body image fall prey to targeted advertising on social media that promises extreme weight loss or enhanced performance. Youth are also more likely to experiment without researching the harmful effects of the ingredients in diet pills. Dr. Jason Nagata, a pediatrician at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in San Francisco who cares for children and young adults with life-threatening eating disorders, believes

¹ Ahmed, R. (no date) *Student advocates lead the way to ban minors from purchasing diet pills and muscle-building supplements, The Science Survey*. Available at: <https://thesciencesurvey.com/editorial/2022/02/01/student-advocates-lead-the-way-to-ban-minors-from-purchasing-diet-pills-and-muscle-building-supplements/#> (Accessed: February 27, 2023).

that easy access to diet pills contributes to his patients' conditions. Nagata said the number of patients he sees with eating disorders has tripled since the pandemic began. They are desperate to get diet pills, "we've had patients who have been so dependent on these products that they will be hospitalized and they're still ordering these products on Amazon," he said².

For the reasons stated above, MDAAP urges a favorable report on House Bill 634.

² *California and New York aim to Curb Diet Pill sales to minors* (no date) *US News*. Available at: <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-09-13/california-and-new-york-aim-to-curb-diet-pill-sales-to-minors> (Accessed: February 27, 2023).