

Hello Members of Maryland State Representatives,

I am Arshia Verma, a freshman at the University of Texas at Austin. Today, I am testifying through my involvement with the Youth Advocacy Corps of the Harvard University Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders, or STRIPED. Through this testimony, I hope to share the important research backing HB 634/SB 602. I grew up in Elkridge, Maryland and this bill is deeply important to me because it will protect the health of countless youth by prohibiting the sale of diet pills to minors. I implore you to vote in favor of this bill that will take care of your young and impressionable constituents.

All around Maryland, there are pharmacies, grocery stores, and local corner stores with readily available diet pills that are accessible to consumers of any age. Even online, they are easy to buy from Amazon, Walmart, and other similar vendors with no restriction on age. These diet pills and supplements are widely underregulated by the FDA, and having been shown time and time again to have harmful impacts on users' health.

As an 18 year old girl, I understand the heavy influence of social media, marketing, and beauty standards that may drive youth just like me to seek out these products in hopes of losing weight and fitting in. However, what many young people don't know, is that these supplements are often laced with banned pharmaceuticals, heavy metals, pesticides, and other toxic ingredients. With the common sale of these products at trusted pharmacies and local corner stores, it is all too easy to blindly purchase and consume these dietary supplements with no suspicions as to their true ingredients.

With the American Academy of Pediatrics releasing reports strongly cautioning against teens using these diet pills, it only makes sense to take these substances out of teens' hands. The lack of prescreening and proper regulation of the ingredients in these products puts minors at harm every single day. And with the high linkage of these products with eating disorders and anabolic steroid use, it is imperative that we address the problem early on by banning these products.

Today, Maryland lawmakers have an opportunity to ban the sale of these harmful over-the-counter diet pills to minors through HB 634/SB 602, and protect children from the aggressive marketing targeted toward them. In an effort to serve in the state youth's best interest, I strongly urge you to vote in support of HB 634/SB 602.

Thank you,
Arshia Verma