



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Samuel Desai, *Chair*  
Emily Shrieves, *Vice-Chair*  
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March 1, 2023

**Re: SB602 | Public Health - Sale of Diet Pills to Minors - Prohibition (Protecting Teenagers From Unregulated Diet Pills)**

Dear Senators,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

For decades, the diet and supplement industry has preyed upon our children. Coupled with exposure to the media and cycling through unrealistic, “trending” body standards, our generation faces a serious risk of developing an eating disorder. A University of California San Francisco study found that 44% of teenage girls believed they were overweight with 60% of teenage girls attempting to lose weight despite being in a medically-healthy weight class.<sup>1</sup> Further, a study conducted among 9th graders found that about 56% of females and 44% of males engaged in one or more disordered eating behaviors (including fasting or skipping meals, diet pills, vomiting, laxatives or smoking cigarettes; and binge-eating).<sup>2</sup> The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does *not* regulate the dietary supplement market, raising alarms for the safety and purity of these items. A company is not required to back marketing claims with science nor must the supplement be effective. Most disturbing is the lack of a federal mandate prohibiting the sale of diet pills and other supplements to minors. One Harvard Research study found that teens who use/abuse diet pills are 4-6 times more likely to develop an eating disorder than their peers, and a similar pipeline between muscle-enhancing supplements and anabolic steroids is found with a 2-5 times increase.<sup>3</sup> In addition to most diet pills being blatantly ineffective, these products have been linked to symptoms such as liver damage, insomnia, high blood pressure, stroke/seizure, and death.<sup>4</sup> By failing to address the

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<sup>1</sup> Ozer EM, Brindis CD, Millstein SG, et al. , *America's adolescents: Are they healthy?* San Francisco University of California, School of Medicine, 1998

<sup>2</sup> CROLL, J., et al. “Prevalence and Risk and Protective Factors Related to Disordered Eating Behaviors Among Adolescents: Relationship to Gender and Ethnicity.” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 31, no. 2, Elsevier BV, Aug. 2002, pp. 166–75. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1054-139x\(02\)00368-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1054-139x(02)00368-3).

<sup>3</sup> “Out of Kids’ Hands.” *Harvard School of Public Health*, [www.hsph.harvard.edu/stripped/out-of-kids-hands](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/stripped/out-of-kids-hands). Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Mayor Clinic Staff. “Dietary Supplements for Weight Loss.” *Mayo Clinic*, [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/weight-loss/art-20046409](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/weight-loss/art-20046409). Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.

disordered-eating epidemic among Maryland teens, policy makers are also failing the physical & mental health of our generation.

**SB602** prohibits the sale of dietary supplements to minors (as defined by drugs/supplements whose marketing claims include enhanced muscle growth or weight loss and whose prescription is not required under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act). The act further requires the Maryland Department of Health to issue visible warnings of risk factors where diet pills are sold and requires these products to be stored in a locked case/behind a counter. Finally, the act gives the Maryland Department of Health authority in evaluating which drugs/supplements are subject to the Act. The Council has voted in favor of **SB602** as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a) Holistically protecting the physical and social health of Maryland Youth (Article IV) which includes proper education about health-promoting behavior & prevention measures not provided by current curriculum.
- b) Efforts to eliminate illegal use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs (Article IV, Section B)
- c) Initiatives designed to promote positive mental health and well-being in youth (Article IV, Section B)

Regulation over Maryland's dietary supplement industry is imperative. It is ludicrous that we control the sale of alcohol and tobacco products to minors but not unregulated diet supplementation with scientifically-proven risks. Keeping diet products out of the hands of Maryland youth safeguards them from adverse health effects, risky behavior, and eating disorders. The Council believes it the duty of the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation which will create a safe, healthy future for our generation. For these reasons, the Council supports **SB602** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,



Samuel Desai, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council