

TESTIMONY

Submitted to the Maryland State Senate Committee on Finance in support of SB0602, Dietary supplements for weight loss and over-the-counter diet pills

Submitted by Najman Mahbouba, Junior at Los Gatos High School

Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland Finance Committee

I am Najman Mahbouba, a Junior at Los Gatos High School. I conducted academic research at UCSB and Oxford on an array of public policy-related initiatives, served as a policy intern for numerous think tanks, and currently am the Executive Director at The Policy Initiative Institute, the only youth-run nonprofit promoting policy studies among students. I am also deeply involved in local government, serving on numerous town and district level commissions and boards, including the 18th Congressional District Advisory Board, and have had award-winning public policy writing published on numerous platforms, including the Stanford University Daily. I chose to be here today to share all this with you to demonstrate that I am a young United States resident who cares deeply about responsible public policy and the well-being of my community. And recently, in light of the exposure regarding the predatory and deceptive nature of numerous prominent diet pill companies, I am concerned -- deeply concerned -- about the well-being of my peers.

I strongly urge you to vote in favor of SB0602.

Dietary supplements sold with false promises to lead to weight loss are readily found across many online vendors and brick-and-mortar stores throughout Maryland. But due to the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, which Congress passed in 1994, the FDA is prohibited from prescreening dietary supplements before they end up on store shelves and online listings, leaving manufacturers to be expected to adhere to an honor system and self-assess the safety of their own products.

Due to this lack of prescreening and conflict of interest, a myriad of dietary supplements sold for weight loss on the consumer market have been identified to contain p

Additionally, as a youth residing in the United States, I have personally observed the severity and prevalence of this issue. With the growth of social media, a culture that emphasizes appearance, and the exploitation of the natural emotional fluctuations of puberty, many of my personal friends and peers have been pushed to experiment with weight loss diet pills. But due to the aforementioned current under regulated state of these substances, they pose a dangerous risk to youth health and well-being, making this a clearly pertinent threat in our state.

Because Bill SB0602 would ban the sale of over-the-counter diet pills and supplements sold for weight loss to minors younger than 18 years old, it gives Maryland lawmakers the opportunity to respond to this threat, and protect state youth from harmful products.

I urge you to vote in support of Bill SB0602, with your support, we will be able to propel Maryland to become the first state in the country to ban the sale of these toxic products to children! Thank you.

Sincerely,

Najman Mahboub