

March 15, 2023

Senator Griffith and Senatoe Klausmeier  
Chair and Vice-Chair, Finance Committee

Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Senate Bill SB0602 (Senator Benson) - Sale of Diet Pills to Minors - Prohibition (Protecting Teenagers From Unregulated Diet Pills)**

Dear Delegates Wilson and Crosby,

We are a group of adolescents and young adults in Maryland who are **in support of SB0602**, a bill to protect minors from dietary supplements for weight loss and over-the-counter (OTC) diet pills, and we are writing to strongly urge you to vote in favor of this important bill.

As youth today, we are growing up in a digital world that constantly bombards us with unrealistic and biased body and appearance ideals. This online influence can lead to very real offline threats to our health and the health of our friends. One of the ways that many youths fall into this pressure is through the use of dietary supplements for weight loss and OTC diet pills, which are widely available and used by people our age. We all know of friends, teammates, and peers who have easily purchased these products within their neighborhoods and online, often with little knowledge of the dangers they present.

Research supports our personal experiences. Over 11% of teens report ever using dietary supplements for weight loss. These products also disproportionately affect Latinx youth, who are 40% more like to use over-the-counter diet pills than White teens. Although the American Academy of Pediatrics has strongly discouraged the use of dietary supplements for weight loss and OTC diet pills, many teens still feel pressure to use them to achieve unrealistic and dangerous appearance goals. As a result, youth who use weight-loss supplements and OTC diet pills are six times more likely to be diagnosed with an eating disorder within three years than nonusers.

Weight-loss supplements and OTC diet pills are not harmless — in fact, these products can be deadly. Studies have found that supplements can be laced with pesticides, heavy metals, anabolic steroids, and pharmaceuticals that can cause strokes, cancer, and severe liver injury, which sometimes require transplants or cause death. However, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does very little to regulate these products, leaving youth in Maryland vulnerable.

The dietary supplement industry has gone under-regulated for years, which has allowed the industry to prey on youth and young adults through deceptive marketing and social media influencers, selling us their lies and dangerous products. It is clear that **action must be taken to protect Maryland youth**. SB0602 gives lawmakers the opportunity to take action to protect us, our teammates, our friends, and our peers from these harmful products. We urge you to vote in support of **SB0602**.

Please feel free to contact Pari Patel, with any questions at [ppate347@nyit.edu](mailto:ppate347@nyit.edu). Thank you for your time and leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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