

My name is Benjamin Nathan and I am a 17 year old from Howard County, Maryland.

As a kid who has previously struggled with my body image, I can attest to the feelings of hopelessness and shame these issues invoke. These feelings build up, and can lead us to a simple yet life-changing google search: information about diet pills. These pills are supposed to solve our problem with one simple capsule. So step 1: get the pills.

(place pills on the table)

These are diet pills. I purchased them myself, as a minor, from my local 7/11. I showed no ID, and bought them over-the-counter in under 30 seconds. Diet pills such as these are everywhere: convenience stores, gas stations, pharmacies, etc. This gives me and other teens endless opportunities to supply ourselves with as many pills as we want.

It is phrases on the packaging like “the world’s strongest fat burner” and “increase energy,” which instantly catch the eye. As a kid viewing these pills in a store, I see the “solution” to body image insecurities, a struggle that is so common for teenagers in this country. And while there is a label at top that says “not recommended for use by minors,” there is nothing that forces us to follow it.

(2 second pause)

Step 2: Take the pills. I could, right now, take one of these pills, consuming toxic chemicals that will disrupt my hormones, growth, and mental health.

There was and remains nothing preventing me from attaining or taking these pills that I have in front of you, nor is there anything preventing the more than one million other minors in the state of Maryland.

Today, I ask you, support the children. Honorable members of the Maryland State Senate, I ask that you vote in favor of Senate Bill 602.