

Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

I am Chuying Huo, a 16-year-old eating disorder prevention advocate and researcher. I spearhead research at Harvard's Center for Geographic Analysis examining disparities in access to eating disorder treatment. I also serve as the Executive Director of CoVisualize, an international data science research NGO. As a high school student, I am deeply concerned about the impact of these harmful products on my peers.

For the safety and well-being of our children, I strongly urge you to vote in favor of Senate Bill 0602.

Social media has created crippling beauty standards, pushing young people down a dark path. I have witnessed my peers and friends turn to weight loss supplements in desperation, oblivious to the dire health risks.

During a school conversation, my classmate revealed that he would often go for days without consuming a proper meal, instead relying solely on energy drinks and diet supplements to power through.

These weight loss supplements are accessible in online venues and local stores across Maryland. There is little regulation surrounding them due to the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act that prohibited the FDA from pre-screening dietary supplements.

Many of these products are laced with illegal substances with dire repercussions. Every year around 23,000 Americans end up in hospital emergency departments due to supplements, and a quarter of those cases are due to weight-loss supplements. These products have been linked to heart attack, stroke, kidney injury, and even death.

Despite the current dire state of affairs, there is still time to enact change. Senate Bill 0602 would save thousands of children, protecting them from large corporations that prey on the vulnerable. By voting in favor of this bill, you are protecting your state, children, and future. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Chuying Huo