



Testimony

Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland State Legislature,

My name is Tasmia Afrin and I am a 17-year-old youth from New York, where I currently attend The Bronx High School of Science. I am here today to share my personal story and advocate for the many youths who strongly support Senate Bill 602.

My story goes way back to when I was nine years old where I first struggled with body image and disordered eating. I was no stranger to weight loss and dieting. How could I not be when all around me adults were constantly talking about keto diets, taking pills to lose belly fat, secret detox drinks, and constant ads on TV about becoming skinny with just one pill? Over the years, constantly being judged silently and out loud for my weight and appearance had come to a soul-crushing point where I just needed to change my body to feel like a person.

In the 5th grade, I began running with NYRR— a nonprofit organization that inspires people to run in races and marathons— and years later joined the middle and high school track team. High school is already daunting enough; juggling APs, studying for exams, getting enough sleep, and having to be the best on my school’s track team drove me to desperation. Everyone watches track and field athletes - we are admired for our lean physique, long, slender limbs, and freakishly fast stamina. What happens when the girl who always ends up in last place does not fit the criteria? We blame it on her body and on her weight.

Everyone around me was obsessed with running fast and being as lean as possible; the boys on the track team would share their stories about taking unhealthy amounts of weight-loss supplements and slowly so did my team. Constantly talking about weight loss products and skipping meals broke my heart but I never realized that my life would fall apart so easily once I developed anorexia myself.

Having been diagnosed with an eating disorder, I craved and crawled towards weight-loss supplements in desperation - all so readily available for me at my local Rite-Aid or pharmacy.

Walking past these supplement aisles was always so scary, I never knew if this would be the last bottle I would need or if this bottle would even work - yet it was so accessible for me. Paired with a severe eating disorder that was already eating away the flesh on my bones, my smile disappeared and my hair would fall out and my bones would rattle.

I began to suffer from liver issues and kidney issues from my constant intake of supplements and I struggled to get up from my bathroom floor. I would sob and scream for hours even skipping classes just to make sure no one knew about the side effects - my parents had no idea that I was taking such products - or that they were the only moments of my life when I watched a boy get up from my hospital bed - undergoing the same pain as I was. It felt so different!



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to be - someone full of life, dreams, and a future. I was constantly cold, starving,

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My life fell apart when I spent days in and out of the hospital over again. However, after months of recovery - which I am still going through - I joined support and educational prevention groups like STRIPED. I knew that I needed to share my story and advocate for the ban of these harmful OTC diet pills and weight-loss products to youth. We need your support more than ever.

Thank you for your time and for listening to my story.