

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Committee,

My name is Anya Kleinman, and I am a high school student in Montgomery County. I am also a youth advocate for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED). STRIPED is a research and training initiative based at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. I strongly urge you to support HB884, a crucial piece of legislation that will protect young people from the dangers of diet pills.

I have struggled with an eating disorder since I was 12 years old. My eating disorder has caused long-lasting health issues, many of which I will struggle with for the rest of my life. I know what it feels like to be preoccupied with weight at a young age. For many years, I prioritized societal beauty standards over personal health, starving myself and obsessing over calories while dancing 20 hours a week.

You probably have heard a lot of the statistics regarding why and how diet pills are harmful, especially in the hands of minors. But I want to focus on one specific figure: Young women using over-the-counter diet pills are 4-6 times more likely to be diagnosed with eating disorders within a few years.

As someone who has grappled with body image issues for many years, I cannot emphasize enough the destructive nature of an eating disorder. Every day, these disorders compromise families, relationships, academic well-being, and physical health, among other things. We must take every step possible to shield the young people of Maryland from these debilitating disorders. HB884 is an important step in preventing eating disorders. It is essential, not just to keep minors safe, but also to shield Maryland from many of the economic losses caused by eating disorders.

As someone who has witnessed firsthand the harmful effects of diet culture, I know that access to these pills can be life-threatening. HB884 is not about restricting personal choice; it is about ensuring that young people are not exposed to dangerous substances that so frequently cause eating disorders. By banning the sale of diet pills to minors, we can take a crucial step toward protecting youth health, promoting evidence-based approaches to nutrition, and preventing the rise of eating disorders in our communities.

I urge this committee to support HB884 and take a stand for the well-being of our youth. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Anya Kleinman