

Good Morning Delegates of the Health Subcommittee,

My name is Erina Haque, and I am an 18-year-old high school senior. I am writing to express my strong support for HB0884, a bill **to prohibit the sale of weight loss and muscle building products to minors**. I have been working to advocate for this legislation as a Youth Corps member for the Harvard-based Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED).

I am also a teen girl who has struggled with body image in the past. Growing up as a Bangladeshi American, I have dealt with the pressure to conform to the stereotypically Eurocentric body standards promoted through the media. The trends surrounding the “perfect” body – the thin thighs, small waist, slender figure – were something that I had learned to strive towards because they were constantly promoted in our popular culture; and yet, it was a standard I could never meet due to my genetics.

And I am not alone in this. According to the National Organization for Women, 78% of 17 year-old girls are “unhappy with their bodies”. But body image struggles are not exclusive to any gender. As reported by the National Institute of Health, 80% of teenage boys report “body dissatisfaction.” To make matters worse, toxic over-the-counter weight-loss and muscle-building supplements are frequently advertised through social media to youth under 18 years of age. These supplements can result in dire effects, including exacerbated disordered eating, anxiety, and depression. A recent study identified 9 different, dangerous stimulants used in weight loss supplements, which can result in serious adverse effects on physical health. In fact, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention documented a series of severe acute hepatitis and liver failure in patients using a dietary supplement for weight loss and muscle-building. Yet, according to a study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, 11% of teens had ever used a weight loss supplement, and 5% of teens had used creatine, one of many dietary supplements sold for muscle building. In fact, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men report ever using these products. The reason why? These diet supplements are dangerously under-regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the status quo, allowing teens to have easy access through both online and brick-and-mortar stores.

You will hear representatives from corporations argue that these supplements are safe. This is a deception. I have seen how many youth in my school use these weight loss or muscle building supplements, and I have seen how it has affected them. I have also seen individuals who were once healthy and strong experience the dangerous physical and psychological ramifications of these supplements. The science does not lie.

Delegates – this issue is not exclusive, and this issue is not partisan. As parents, you often cannot see the products or the content that is promoted to your kids through social media. If you have teenagers, they are already seeing these products promoted to them – I can attest to that. If you have tweens, toddlers, or young children, they will one day see these products promoted to them. There is nothing that is worth the health and well-being of your children. By voting for Maryland Bill HB0884 to prohibit the sale of toxic over-the-counter weight-loss and muscle-building supplements through BOTH online AND in-person venues like brick-and-mortar stores, you are voting to protect the children of Maryland. By regulating the sale of these supplements and requiring both online and in-person venues to ask for ID prior to sale, you are protecting your own children too. For these reasons, I urge you to take action by voting affirmatively for HB0884. Thank you.