

February 17, 2025

Dear Members of the Maryland Assembly Health and Government Operations Committee:

As a lifelong Marylander and Chief Executive of the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), please accept my respectful but strong opposition to House Bill 884. This legislation would prohibit the sale of safe, regulated weight management and muscle-building dietary supplements to consumers under the age of eighteen in the State of Maryland. Such policy is counter to effective public health efforts and would inflict unintended consequences to the detriment of Maryland's consumers and overall economy.

CRN is the leading trade association representing dietary supplement and functional food manufacturers and ingredient suppliers. The dietary supplement industry is critical to Maryland's economy, accounting for over \$3.3 billion in total economic impact, over 5,000 direct jobs, and \$406 million in tax revenue.¹ Additionally, safe and regulated dietary supplement products are used by millions of Americans to help maintain a healthy lifestyle. A 2022 peer-reviewed paper examining dietary supplements for weight management concluded that common ingredients for weight management, including ones that would be restricted by this bill, are safe when taken as directed. We have included a copy of the 2022 report with this letter.

We strongly sympathize with anyone impacted by eating disorders and thus respect the intent of this proposal; however, the bill fails to help those suffering from this condition. HB0884's misguided approach has erroneously associated muscle-building and weight-loss dietary supplements with eating disorders among underage individuals, despite no scientific evidence of a causal relationship. In fact, a 2023 peer-reviewed paper examining the complex and multifaceted risk factors associated with this condition found no known causal relationship between the use of dietary supplements and the onset of eating disorders. We have included a copy of the 2023 report with this letter as well. Eating disorders are complex mental health conditions with a myriad of contributing factors; scapegoating dietary supplements will not do anything to address the root causes of these issues.

HB0884 would have far-reaching effects on the economy of Maryland by placing new economic and compliance burdens on retail establishments. If enacted, businesses across the State would be penalized and punished for selling legal products regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. To comply, stores and online retailers, will be tasked with age verifying purchases for a broad and vague description of products under threat of penalization. This legislation would also place unreasonable burdens on local retailers as it would require thousands of products to be placed behind store counters in locked cases, indirectly limiting access for **all** consumers and making it more difficult for customers to evaluate different supplements to determine which product might be right for them. Finally, the bill places an unattainable enforcement authority on the State to inspect thousands of retailers resulting in a large financial cost to taxpayers.

¹ Economic impact study of the dietary supplement industry. Economic Impact Study of the Dietary Supplement Industry Council for Responsible Nutrition. (2024, January 23). <https://www.crnusa.org/resources/economic-impact-study-dietary-supplement-industry>.

CRN is committed to working with the bill sponsor and policymakers in Maryland to enhance public health; however, targeting safe, beneficial, and federally regulated products is not a viable solution. The reality is that this legislation will not provide any benefit toward reducing eating disorders among young people and, in fact, creates a false sense of hope that the legislature is doing something to address this issue and help those in need. We urge you to reevaluate HB0884 as its extensive impacts will be felt by most of the communities and consumers that you represent, and respectfully ask that you oppose this legislation.

We thank you for the opportunity to convey our position and are available to answer any questions.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Mister". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Mister
President & CEO