

An Act Protecting Children from Harmful Diet Pills and Muscle-Building Supplements

What is the evidence?

Our youth are at risk.

Eating disorders are a serious health problem affecting youth and adults of all races, ages, and genders. Diet pills and muscle-building supplements are linked with eating disorders as well as body dysmorphic disorder.¹ Adolescent and young adult women who use over-the-counter (OTC) diet pills are nearly 4 times more likely to be diagnosed with an eating disorder within several years than their peers.² An estimated 300,000 Massachusetts residents suffer from eating disorders.³

Dangerous products.

Dietary supplements sold for weight loss and muscle building have been found to be laced with illegal substances such as steroids⁴ and prescription pharmaceuticals.⁵ These products are linked to serious health risks including organ failure,⁶ testicular cancer,⁷ and even death.⁸ The American Academy of Pediatrics has released reports strongly cautioning against teens using OTC diet pills or muscle-building supplements.⁹

Insufficient regulation of dietary supplements by the FDA.

Under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA Act), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not have the authority to require rigorous proof of safety or efficacy prior to the sale of these products.¹⁰ One recent study found that two-thirds of recalled supplements still contained contaminants six months after FDA recalls.¹¹ To protect children from these dangerous products, policy intervention is urgently needed at the state and local levels.

What H.2215/S.1465 Will Do

The bill will safeguard children from unfettered access to underregulated and dangerous products.

When passed, the bill will:

- 1) Prevent the sale of OTC diet pills and dietary supplements for weight loss and muscle building to minors under 18 years of age.
- 2) Require the placement of signs alerting consumers to the health dangers associated with these products.
- 3) Establishes the attorney general's enforcement authority for violations, and provides for a civil penalty for a violation to be not more than \$500 per violation.

Physicians, youth organizations, and fitness professionals support H.2215/S.1465
Visit <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/massachusetts/> to read their testimonies.



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