

Fact Sheet

Protect Child Health in Virginia

HB.1585 COULD SAVE LIVES AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR VIRGINIA



The Problem



- Youth are at risk.** A new study by Hall et al. found that nearly 1 in 10 adolescents have used ineffective and potentially harmful over-the-counter diet pills and similar products misused for weight loss in their lifetimes. Prevalence of use among adolescents was 2.0% in the past week, 4.4% in the past month, 6.2% in the past year, and 8.9% in their lifetime.⁽¹⁾
- Dangerous products.** Over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building dietary supplements carry serious risks, including organ failure, heart attack, stroke, testicular cancer, and even death.⁽²⁻⁵⁾ Some contain illegal steroids, pharmaceutical drugs, or heavy metals.⁽⁶⁾ The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly cautions against teens using over-the-counter diet pills⁽⁷⁾ or muscle-building supplements for any reason.⁽⁸⁾
- Weak federal regulation.** Supplements are taken off shelves by the Food and Drug Administration only after reports of serious injury.⁽⁹⁾ In 2015, attorneys general of 14 states joined in a [letter](#) to Congress seeking a federal investigation into dietary supplements,⁽¹⁰⁾ but still no federal action has been taken. Virginia's youth need greater protection now.



Urgent Action Needed by Virginia Lawmakers



- The Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders** urges state leaders to protect young people from the dangers of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements. If signed into law, **HB.1585** would ban the sale of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements to minors under 18 years old and move these products behind the counter, as already done for other dangerous products such as tobacco and pseudoephedrine. New York State has already passed a similar law, which took effect in April 2024.



Two Studies by Brandeis Economists Estimate Very Low, One-time Implementation Cost but Millions in Savings From Protective Effects



- A study examining similar legislation from Massachusetts aimed to evaluate the value of implementing a state-level ban on sale of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements to minors.**
 - The study gathered data through key informant interviews and public data on state websites.
 - The study considered minimum, best, and maximum values for state personnel time and salaries needed for all key provisions of the legislation.
- The study found one-time implementation opportunity cost** estimated to be **only \$47,536**, which is less than a starting salary of a state administrative staff position.⁽¹¹⁾
- A second study estimated the cost-effectiveness of similar legislation in Massachusetts and likely effects on health equity.**
 - They found similar legislation would prevent **57,034 eating disorder cases** and **more than 46,000 other adverse medical events** over 30 years.
 - Also it would yield **annual healthcare savings of \$14 million** and **societal savings of \$30 million**.
- Health equity analysis showed results were **as beneficial or even more so for Latine & Black youth compared to their White counterparts**.⁽¹²⁾

Given the bill's strong potential to provide urgently needed protection for youth and the estimated low cost of implementation, we urge your support for HB.1585.

Fact Sheet

Protect the Health of Virginia's Children

IF PASSED, RESEARCHERS ESTIMATE SIMILAR LEGISLATION WOULD COST STATES A MINISCULE ONE-TIME IMPLEMENTATION COST AND COULD SAVE VIRGINIANS MILLIONS OF DOLLARS EVERY YEAR

References

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Given the bill's strong potential to provide urgently needed protection for youth and the demonstrated low cost of implementation, we urge your support for HB.1585.