September 2024

Re: Dietary supplements for weight loss and muscle building and over-the-counter diet pills

Dear Honorable Lawmakers of the Illinois State Legislature:

We the undersigned respectfully urge your support in pushing crucial legislation to protect children across Illinois by prohibiting the sale of weight-loss and muscle-building dietary supplements and over-the-counter (OTC) diet pills in stores or online to any person under 18 years of age. Legislation of this nature would also ensure that health-related notices regarding these dangerous products are conspicuously posted at each purchase counter in stores.

While these dietary supplements deceptively claim to promote healthy weight loss or muscle building – some using celebrity endorsers – these products are not required to demonstrate rigorous testing for safety or efficacy before entering the market, are not medically recommended, and are inadequately regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Alarmingly, there are no age restrictions on the sale of these products, leaving young people, who are particularly vulnerable to deceptive marketing claims, with no protection from purchasing these dangerous products.

Extensive research documents the dangers of these products:

- The **American Academy of Pediatrics** has **strongly cautioned against teens using weight-loss supplements**.[1]
- The **Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) **does not screen supplements** for safety or efficacy.[2]
- Weight-loss supplements have been found to be **laced with pesticides, heavy metals, anabolic steroids, and pharmaceuticals** that can **cause strokes, cancer, and severe liver injury**, which sometimes require transplants or cause death.[3] Not only are these products not proven effective, they can be dangerous.
- A recent study documented **a 50% increase in calls to poison control centers** over the past decade due to dietary supplements, many of which claimed to promote weight loss.[4]
- **23,000 Americans** are sent to **emergency rooms** every year due to dietary supplements. **25%** of those cases are **due to weight-loss supplements**.[5]
- A 2019 study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* identified a **3 times increased risk for serious medical events** (such as hospitalization, emergency room visits, and death) for dietary supplements sold for weight loss and OTC diet pills as compared to vitamins.[6]
- **11% of teens** report ever having **used dietary supplements for weight loss**.[7]
- **Latinx teens are 40% more likely to use OTC diet pills** than white teens.[8]

- Adolescent and young adult women who use OTC pills have **6 times the risk of being diagnosed with an eating disorder** within the next three years compared to non-users.[9]
- A study identified 9 different, **dangerous stimulants not approved by the FDA** but used in dietary supplements. These adulterated supplements have been linked to serious adverse health effects, including sudden death. **Experimental drug "cocktails"** have been repeatedly found in weight-loss supplements, endangering consumers of all ages, including children.[10]

We must take action now to protect the children of Illinois by **making it harder for children to be targeted by the empty promises of under-regulated weight-loss and muscle-building supplements**. These products pose a serious risk to children of all ethnicity groups, genders, and ages across the state. The **American Academy of Pediatrics** has *strongly cautioned against teens using these products*. The **Food and Drug Administration** has *yet to approve any over-the-counter weight-loss products for children*.

Restricting access puts Illinois' public health approach in line with physician recommendations. **We, the undersigned, urge your support in protecting young people in Illinois from these dangerous products.**

Sincerely,

Organizations:

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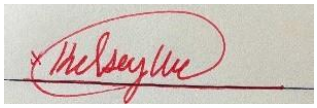

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