

## Talking Points

### **HB1195: An Act Protecting Children From Harmful Diet Pills and Muscle-Building Supplements** *Sponsored by: Rep. Kay Khan*

1. The market for dietary supplements is a \$32 billion a year industry.<sup>1</sup> Although supplements sold for weight loss and muscle building are not recommended by doctors, they are widely used. Fifteen percent of adults<sup>2</sup> and 11% of teens<sup>3</sup> in the United States reported using weight loss supplements at some point in their lives.
  - Dietary supplements can easily be purchased by people of all ages at pharmacies, grocery stores, health food stores, and other retailers. These products are under-regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are not screened by the FDA for safety or efficacy before they are released on to the market.<sup>4</sup>
2. Research shows that dietary supplements sold for weight loss and muscle building are too often contaminated with prescription drugs and dangerous chemicals and are associated with serious health risks, including stroke, testicular cancer, and severe liver injury, sometimes requiring transplants or even leading to death.<sup>1, 5-8</sup>
  - The rate of liver failure caused by dietary supplements has risen 185% in the past decade<sup>9</sup>, and 16% of cases of serious drug-induced liver injury in the United States are attributed to dietary supplements, the vast majority being those sold for weight loss and muscle building.<sup>10</sup>
3. There are many types of diet pills on the market. One over-the-counter drug for weight loss—a form of the medication orlistat—has been approved by the FDA; however, this drug was not approved for people under the age of 18 years.<sup>11</sup> Despite this, there are currently no measures in place to prevent minors from purchasing this drug or other over-the-counter weight loss products.
  - Experts in the field have raised serious concerns about people with eating disorders abusing diet pills, including orlistat.<sup>12</sup> Banning the sale of diet pills to minors and placing them behind the counter could help prevent misuse and abuse of this drug by youth in Massachusetts who are struggling with eating disorders.
4. The American Academy of Pediatrics has released reports stating that teens should never use diet pills<sup>13</sup> or muscle-building supplements.<sup>14</sup> Massachusetts has a responsibility to protect its youth from potentially dangerous products sold for weight loss and muscle building.
  - State Representative Kay Khan (D-Newton) has introduced a bill that, if passed, would regulate the sale of diet pills and muscle-building supplements. This bill would ban the sale of these products to minors younger than 18 years old and move these products from the open shelves to behind the counter, as is done with cigarettes, alcohol, and other products known to pose health risks.

## References

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