



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Massachusetts teens survey nearly 500 of their peers across state and uncover alarming information on use of weight loss and muscle-building supplements by minors – Call for legislation

NEWTON, MA, USA (May 22, 2020)

In a survey conducted by teen advocates and taken by nearly 500 youth residents of Massachusetts, 93% of participants rated it “easy” for people under the age of 18 to purchase these products. Even more shockingly, when asked about conversations with adults regarding dangers, 93% of participants reported adults discussing the dangers of alcohol and drugs, whereas only 20% reported similar conversations surrounding diet pills and muscle building supplements.

With the market for dietary supplements being a \$32 billion a year industry, advocates are pushing harder than ever to promote the importance of body positivity and educate Massachusetts’s youth about the dangers of the diet industry. “As a high schooler, I know how common the promotion of diet supplements to minors is, and I advocate to protect more people from the dangers of the diet industry,” says Victoria Leaper, Chair of Newton North Body Confidence Club.

Rep. Kay Khan (D-Newton), the sponsor of H. 1942, *An Act protecting children from harmful diet pills and muscle-building products*, stated "after reading many studies showing dietary supplements contain unknown harmful substances that are easily obtained by those under the age of 18, I became instantly concerned with protecting our youth. We must hold the dietary and muscle-building supplement industry accountable and ensure that there is a proactive regulatory process for the health and wellness of all individuals. With the help of these young advocates and their research, we will continue to drive this conversation forward and pass this crucial piece of legislation."

“The problem here is a lack of education combined with extreme accessibility,” says Michaela Patriacca, a Senior at Newton North High School. “These two factors make it dangerously easy for minors to develop unhealthy habits and potentially eating disorders.”

The proposed legislation H. 1942 would prevent the sale of these weight loss and muscle building supplements to children under the age of 18. Organizations such as the Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association (MEDA) and STRIPED (Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders) have gathered advocates to fight for passage of the bill.

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“I have seen firsthand the devastating effects diet pills have had on individuals suffering with eating disorders,” says Rebecca Manley, founder of MEDA. The use of weight loss and muscle building supplements have been directly linked to the development of eating disorders, steroid abuse, as well as liver failure and death. Rebecca also says, “I applaud the efforts of the youth who spent their quarantine time promoting this survey and completing training sessions. They have done a remarkable job!”

“Dietary supplements sold for weight loss and muscle building have been found to be laced with prescription pharmaceuticals, banned substances, heavy metals, pesticides, and other dangerous chemicals. How can we continue to let the manufacturers of these products and the retailers who profit from them play Russian roulette with the Commonwealth’s youth?” said Dr. Bryn Austin, director of STRIPED and Harvard professor. Currently H.1942 has a hearing before Massachusetts Legislature’s Joint Committee on Public Health on May 30, 2020. It needs to be reported favorably out of the Committee if it is to stay alive for possible passage in the legislature this year.

To see the full results of the Massachusetts Youth Survey on Weight Loss and Muscle Building Supplements, go to: https://www.medainc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Youth-Survey-Results_5.18.20.pdf

To learn more about how H. 1942 will , go to: <https://www.medainc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/H.1942-Talking-Points.pdf>



About MEDA:

Our Mission: To **HEAL, EDUCATE** and **EMPOWER** our community to support the people, families and other community members impacted by eating disorders, to stop the spread of eating disorders through educational awareness and early detection, and to promote greater acceptance of all body types.

Our Vision: We envision a community without eating disorders that promotes a positive body culture.

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