

STATE OF NEW YORK

3764

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 30, 2021

Introduced by Sen. COMRIE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Consumer Protection

AN ACT to amend the general business law, in relation to requiring persons offering weight loss services to provide notice of certain risks

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The general business law is amended by adding a new article 30-B to read as follows:

ARTICLE 30-B

WEIGHT LOSS SERVICES

Section 641. Weight loss services and products.

642. Weight loss services; notice.

643. Deceptive practices.

644. Local regulation.

645. Penalties.

§ 641. Weight loss services and products. For the purposes of this article:

1. "Weight loss services" shall mean counseling and educational activities, including, but not limited to, recommending the use of weight loss products, which have the primary purpose of helping individuals reduce body weight. Weight loss services does not include providing information to the public regarding individual weight loss products if the person, firm or corporation is not also engaged in counseling activities.

2. "Weight loss products" shall mean any foods, ingredients or components of foods, nutritional formulas or supplements, drugs, equipment or any other products sold or offered for the primary purpose of helping individuals reduce body weight.

3. "Direct seller" shall mean any person if (a) such person is (i) engaged in the trade or business of selling or soliciting the sale of consumer products to any buyer on a buy-sell basis or a deposit-commission basis for resale by the buyer or any other person in the home or otherwise than in a permanent retail establishment, or (ii) engaged in

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 the trade or business of selling or soliciting the sale of consumer
2 products in the home or otherwise than in a permanent retail establish-
3 ment;

4 (b) substantially all the remuneration, whether or not paid in cash,
5 for the performance of the services described in paragraph (a) of this
6 subdivision is directly related to sales or other output, including the
7 performance of services, rather than to the number of hours worked; and

8 (c) the services performed by the person are performed pursuant to a
9 written contract between such person and the person for whom the
10 services are performed and such contract provides that the person will
11 not be treated as an employee with respect to such services for state
12 and federal tax purposes.

13 § 642. Weight loss services; notice. 1. Any person, firm or corpo-
14 ration offering weight loss services or weight loss services and
15 products in this state by means of selling or offering to sell such
16 services or products to the public shall either (i) conspicuously post a
17 sign, measuring at least nine inches by fourteen inches, where consumers
18 are offered the services or products, in writing, in at least ten point
19 print, or (ii) provide in writing, in at least ten point print, to indi-
20 viduals and consumers prior to the purchase of such goods or services
21 the following notice or some other notice which substantially contains
22 or provides the following information.

23 WEIGHT LOSS AND DIETING INFORMATION

24 a. WARNING! Rapid weight loss may cause serious health problems. Rapid
25 weight loss is weight loss of more than 1 1/2 to 2 pounds per week or
26 weight loss of more than 1 percent of body weight per week after the
27 second week of participation in a weight loss program.

28 b. Consult your physician before starting any weight loss program or
29 using any diet medications or formulas.

30 c. Long term weight control is the safest and most important goal of
31 any diet program. Permanent lifestyle changes such as eating nutritious
32 foods, calorie control and increasing physical activity help promote
33 long term weight loss according to medical experts.

34 d. Ask the person providing or selling you weight loss advice or diet
35 products, medications or formulas about their qualifications and train-
36 ing in nutrition and health.

37 e. You have the right to:

38 (i) Ask questions about the potential health risks of this program or
39 product, its nutritional content, and its psychological-support and
40 educational components;

41 (ii) Know the price of treatment, including the price of any extra
42 products, services, supplements and laboratory tests; and

43 (iii) Know the program duration of the program recommended to you.

44 2. The provisions of this section shall not apply to direct sellers,
45 retail stores or pharmacies selling weight loss products and providing
46 information to the public regarding individual products, unless such
47 businesses offer both weight loss services and weight loss products.
48 Furthermore, the provisions of this section shall not apply to weight
49 loss services provided to an individual by any person, firm or corpo-
50 ration which provides weight loss services incidental to their primary
51 professional services to such individual and which does not offer to
52 sell weight loss services or weight loss products to the public.

53 § 643. Deceptive practices. It shall be a deceptive trade practice for
54 any person, firm or corporation offering or providing weight loss
55 services or weight loss products to misrepresent, directly or indirect-
56 ly:

1 1. the potential health risks of the weight loss services or products
2 offered;

3 2. the success of participants using the weight loss services or
4 products offered in achieving or maintaining weight loss or weight
5 control. Any representation of successful weight loss or weight control
6 by participants will be considered misleading if the person, firm or
7 corporation does not possess or rely upon a reasonable basis for the
8 representation at the time it is disseminated. If a claim is made that
9 scientific evidence supports the representation, the person, firm or
10 corporation must possess competent and reliable scientific evidence
11 substantiating such claim. For the purposes of this subdivision, "compe-
12 tent and reliable scientific evidence" shall mean those tests, analyses,
13 research, studies or other evidence based on the expertise of profes-
14 sionals in the relevant area, that have been conducted and evaluated in
15 an objective manner by persons qualified to do so, using procedures
16 generally accepted in the profession to yield accurate and reliable
17 results;

18 3. the educational and professional experience of the personnel
19 providing weight loss services or weight loss products;

20 4. the total charges for any weight loss services and products; or

21 5. the actual or estimated duration of the use of the weight loss
22 services or products offered.

23 § 644. Local regulation. Nothing in this article shall be construed to
24 restrict the power of any county, city, town or village to adopt and
25 enforce local laws, ordinances or regulations which exceed the minimum
26 requirements of this article, as long as such local laws, ordinances or
27 regulations are not inconsistent with the provisions of this article.
28 Any local laws or rules regulating weight loss services and products in
29 a city having a population of one million or more and which were in
30 effect prior to the effective date of this article and any notice
31 provided pursuant to such law or rule, shall be deemed to be consistent
32 with the provisions of this article.

33 § 645. Penalties. Each day a person, firm or corporation violates any
34 provision of this article shall constitute a single violation. Whenever
35 there shall be a violation of this article, an application may be made
36 by the attorney general in the name of the people of the state of New
37 York to a court or justice having jurisdiction by a special proceeding
38 to issue an injunction, and upon notice to the defendant of not less
39 than five days, to enjoin and restrain the continuance of such
40 violations. If it shall appear to the court or justice that the defend-
41 ant has in fact, violated this article, an injunction may be issued by
42 such court or justice, enjoining and restraining any further violation,
43 without requiring proof that any person has, in fact been injured or
44 damaged thereby. Whenever the court shall determine that a violation of
45 this article has occurred, the court may impose a civil penalty of not
46 more than one hundred dollars for the first violation and two hundred
47 dollars for each violation thereafter, but in no event shall the total
48 penalty therefor exceed one thousand dollars. In connection with any
49 such application, the attorney general is authorized to take proof and
50 make a determination of the relevant facts and to issue subpoenas in
51 accordance with the civil practice law and rules.

52 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
53 it shall have become a law.