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COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FINANCE
JOINT ECONOMIC
JUDICIARY
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

July 17, 2025

Federal Trade Commission
Attn: Chairman Andrew N. Ferguson
600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chairman Ferguson,

We write to urge the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to investigate questionable online marketing practices surrounding GLP-1 receptor agonists, including semaglutide and tirzepatide. These drugs, increasingly promoted as alternatives to FDA-approved medications like Ozempic and Wegovy, are being advertised in ways that mislead consumers and undermine both public health and the integrity of the pharmaceutical marketplace.

On February 20, 2025, 38 Attorneys General wrote to the FDA[1] urging it to take swift action against bad actors who endanger consumers with counterfeit forms of weight loss and diabetes drugs. This bipartisan coalition of Attorneys General also urged the FDA to increase enforcement actions against compounding pharmacies illegally participating in this market. We have attached a copy of that letter which explains in detail many of the threats and we encourage you to review it.[2]

The FDA-approved GLP-1 medications are life-changing for millions of patients and resulted from decades of research and testing. Amid the unprecedented demand for these miracle medicines, foreign criminals and con artists are defrauding and endangering Americans by selling and shipping counterfeit or deceptively-marketed GLP-1 drugs and active ingredients.

Many sellers of these drugs advertise directly to consumers on social media, claiming that their products are an easier and more affordable way to obtain GLP-1 drugs (see the below addendum). Federal law requires that advertising for drugs be "truthful, non-misleading and accurate." A recent peer-reviewed analysis entitled ***Online Advertising of Compounded Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 Receptor Agonists*** published in JAMA Health Forum (January 17, 2025) reviewed online sales advertising for compounded GLP-1 medications between July and September 2024[3]. The findings of the analysis were disturbing.

The authors of the study report that "most websites did not disclose that compounded GLP-1 RAs were not FDA approved, although some suggested these drugs were FDA approved. Many websites provided limited safety information and unauthorized efficacy claims. Some websites did not disclose that these medications were compounded or incorrectly referred to them as generic."

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[1] https://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/news/2025/2/20/pr25-9.html
[2] https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/attorneygeneral/documents/pr/2025/2025-2-glp1-letter.pdf
[3] https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2829225

More than a third of the sites failed to include precautions, warnings, or contraindications. Fourteen percent even failed to disclose adverse effects.

Moreover, many of these sites employed aggressive and manipulative marketing tactics that closely resemble those used in unscrupulous supplement sales, including celebrity endorsements, discount countdown timers, and testimonial-heavy landing pages. Consumers are often directed through low-barrier "consultations" that circumvent the more thorough medical evaluation such a prescription should require.

These illicit activities have already resulted in severe harm to unsuspecting users. To date, there have been over 900 adverse events associated with compounded versions of the two leading therapies in this class – trizepitide and semaglutide – including at least 17 deaths.[4]

These are not isolated incidents. What we are seeing is a growing commercial ecosystem that relies on the facade of legitimacy, all the while sidestepping appropriate regulatory oversight. Consumers seeking to improve their health are funneled through online evaluations and presented with products that may well pose genuine medical risks, all while being told they are receiving the same benefits as prescription medications that have passed FDA review.

The compounding of medications plays a limited yet vital role in patient care, particularly in cases of allergies or supply shortages. However, some bad actors are exploiting the compounding process for mass-market distribution under the guise of affordability, particularly now that semaglutide and tirzepatide are no longer on the FDA shortage list. The companies operating these sites are exploiting consumer confusion around the distinction between FDA-approved drugs and compounded alternatives, often through deceptive marketing practices. In doing so, they are creating a marketplace that is both misleading and dangerous. The problems with this abuse of GLP-1 compounding practices have become so evident that legitimate manufacturers are beginning to cut off supplies to compounders due to legal concerns.[5]

Traditionally the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) plays an important complementary role alongside the FDA in protecting consumers from false advertising practices related to drugs. Your authority is clear under Section 5 of the FTC Act. We urge the Commission to initiate a formal investigation into these advertising practices by companies marketing GLP-1 drugs—whether compounded, counterfeit, or otherwise misrepresented—and consider enforcement actions where warranted. We also encourage the FTC to work with the FDA to issue clear guidance regarding the marketing of compounded pharmaceuticals, particularly those marketed as substitutes for regulated medications.

The risks to consumers are real and growing. As an elected representative of the people of Tennessee and the State's chief legal officer, we know that deceptive marketing practices like these undermine consumer trust and put people at serious risk. Swift action will help protect public

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[4] https://www.banks.senate.gov/press-releases/senator-jim-banks-sends-letter-to-acting-fda-commissioner-regarding-dangerous-counterfeit-weight-loss-drugs/

[5] https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/novo-nordisk-ends-collaboration-with-hims-hers-over-weight-loss-drug-sale-2025-06-23/

health and reaffirm the Commission's role in ensuring "truthful, non-misleading and accurate" advertising of sensitive products consumers are putting into their bodies.

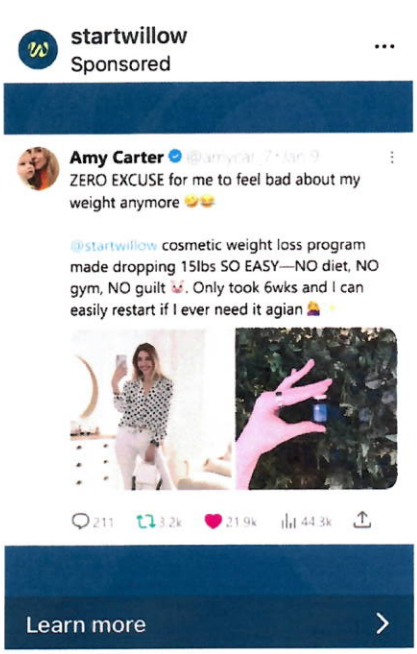
Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working with you to protect Tennesseans and all Americans from these deceptive and dangerous practices.

Sincerely,

Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

Jonathan Skrmetti
Tennessee Attorney General

Addendum: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Amy Carter
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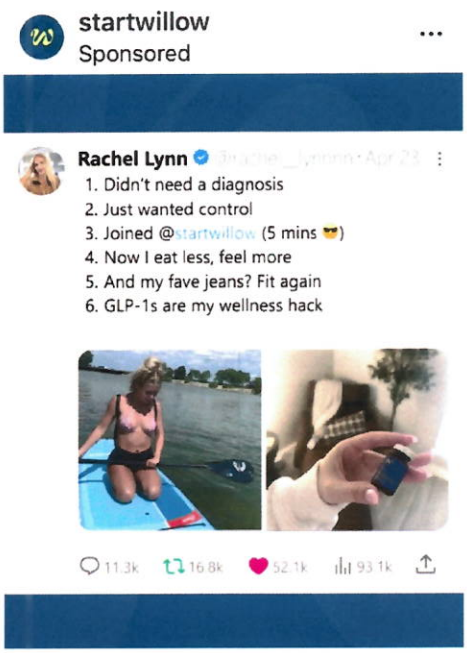
@startwillow cosmetic weight loss program made dropping 15lbs SO EASY—NO diet, NO gym, NO guilt. Only took 6wks and I can easily restart if I ever need it agian
211
3.2k
21.9k
44.3k
Learn more


startwillow
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Rachel Lynn
1. Didn't need a diagnosis
2. Just wanted control
3. Joined @startwillow (5 mins)
4. Now I eat less, feel more
5. And my fave jeans? Fit again
6. GLP-1s are my wellness hack
11.3k
16.8k
52.1k
93.1k


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This offer will be gone soon !!
Hurry up and qualify before the price goes back up
Summer Special starts NOW
Tirzepatide delivers 2x faster results, 5x smaller price tag
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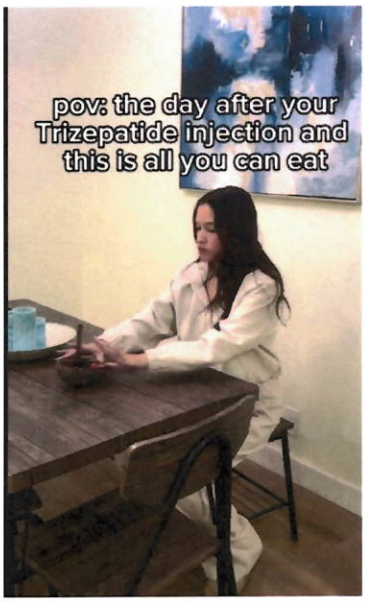
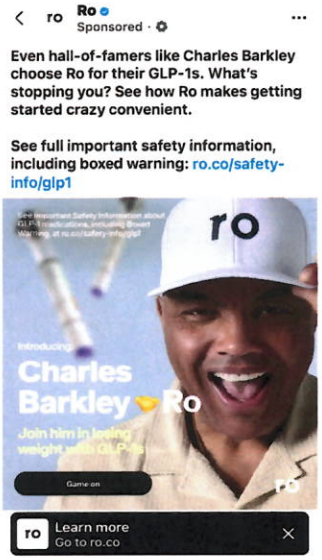
Tirzepatide as low as $99 a month!
Learn more


pov: the day after your Trizepatide injection and this is all you can eat


see you in summer with a snatched waist & the smallest bikini ever thx to my GLP-1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Even hall-of-famers like Charles Barkley choose Ro for their GLP-1s. What's stopping you? See how Ro makes getting started crazy convenient.
See full important safety information, including boxed warning: ro.co/safety-info/glp1
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