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Governor Charlie Crist
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

I am writing to introduce you to the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) and request your assistance in reinstating access to obesity management services currently being denied to many Floridians.

The OAC is a non-profit patient organization based in Tampa, Florida dedicated to educating and advocating for those affected by obesity. It is our mission to elevate and empower those affected by obesity through education, advocacy and support. By strictly representing the interests and concerns of obese patients, the OAC is a unique organization.

Obesity is a serious health epidemic that targets one in four Americans. Those affected by obesity often experience or are at a much higher risk for a variety of obesity related illnesses including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and some cancers (endometrial, breast and colon). In Florida, more than 3.4 million are considered obese (30 pounds or more overweight) and more than 850,000 are considered morbidly obese (100 pounds or more over ideal body weight). It is estimated that Florida's obese population accounted for more than \$3.9 billion dollars in medical costs related to their obesity.

As you may be aware, in January 2005, Florida-based insurers began a disturbing trend by eliminating insurance coverage for obesity management services including bariatric surgery (weight-loss surgery). The OAC believes that this decision negatively impacts the quality of health and life of Floridians by denying them access to needed medical care. Obesity is a complex disease that requires treatment. The medical treatment of obesity decreases mortality, improves or resolves obesity related illnesses and improves quality of life. Denying patients and their physicians proven options for treatment (medical weight management and weight-loss surgery) is an ill-advised, short-term economic decision by Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the other Florida-based insurers that endangers the long-term health of many Floridians.

The OAC respectfully requests your assistance and advice in convincing Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the other Florida-based insurers to reinstate access to obesity management services. Your support in this matter would be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information or be of assistance on any other obesity-related issues. I can be reached via phone at (813) 872-7835 or via e-mail at jnadglowski@obesityaction.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Nadglowski Jr.
President & CEO