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January 26, 2024

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is deeply disappointed by the January 25th decision by the North Carolina State Health Plan's (NCSHP) Board of Trustees to exclude state employee coverage for FDA-approved anti-obesity medications (AOMs) – specifically GLP-1 medications.

The OAC is the leading national non-profit dedicated to serving people living with obesity through awareness, support, education, and advocacy. Our vision is to create a society where all individuals are treated with respect and without discrimination or bias regardless of their size or weight. We strive for those affected by the disease of obesity to have the right to access safe and effective treatment options. And we educate all individuals to understand that when it comes to health, weight matters. OAC has a strong and growing membership of over 80,000 individuals living with obesity, across the United States and 3,157 members in North Carolina.

North Carolina ranks 25th in states impacted by obesity. More than 34% of adults in North Carolina have obesity, and more than 35% of adults have overweight. The state must provide its residents with safe, effective and accessible options for obesity management. State employees with NCSHP coverage have benefited from AOMs and GLP-1s specifically since 2015 and we applauded the state for being forward thinking in their coverage approach. However, the Board's decision to eliminate NCSHP coverage for GLP-1 medications for obesity effective April 1st clearly discriminates against plan beneficiaries seeking access to life changing and lifesaving treatments based solely on cost.

AOMs should be affordable and covered just like any other medication for a serious chronic disease. All people deserve quality and affordable obesity care, so bringing down the price and adding coverage for AOMs will save lives and help address access disparities. All actors in this market, including drug manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers, and health insurance plans, must change practices to solve for meaningful access to obesity care. All people deserve quality and affordable obesity care. We cannot make this happen without all three actors working toward the best interest of the patients and not just in the interest of their bottom lines.

Despite the broad acceptance of obesity as a chronic disease and the recognition that patients deserve access to care, the Board has chosen to apply a double standard when evaluating coverage of obesity care. As a nation, we must stop evaluating coverage of obesity care through a cost-only lens. The goal of healthcare is not to save money but improve the health and well-being of people. We request that NCSHP continue to negotiate an equitable and accessible GLP-1 AOM coverage policy.

Should you have questions or need additional information, please contact our Policy Advisor, Chris Gallagher at chris@potomaccurrents.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Nadglowski".

Joe Nadglowski

President and CEO

Obesity Action Coalition