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February 16, 2023

Dear Human Services Committee Leaders Lesser, Gilchrest, Seminara and Case,

On behalf of the more than 78,000 national members and 1,100 Connecticut-based members of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to the individual affected by the disease of obesity, we urge you to support committee passage of Senate Bill (SB) 977, which would require broader medical assistance coverage for obesity treatment services such as bariatric and metabolic surgery, FDA-approved anti-obesity medications (AOMs) and nutritional counseling.

OAC appreciated the opportunity to present both written and oral testimony before the Human Services Committee on February 14<sup>th</sup>. We are hopeful that the committee will vote to approve this legislation with some minor amendments to clarify the intent of the legislation as well as eliminate language that is stigmatizing to individuals affected by obesity.

For example, we suggest that the definition of "medical services" should be amended to include language indicating that these are prescription drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of obesity. In addition, we ask the committee to utilize "person-first" language when referring to people affected by obesity as we should not define individuals by their disease or condition.

Finally, OAC is concerned with some of the comments made by the Department of Social Services during the hearing, which alluded to how costly these drugs would be to the state's Medicaid program. It is important to remember that while some AOMs may be costly, state Medicaid programs often receive very generous rebates and discounts from manufacturers. In addition, creating a system where Medicaid beneficiaries will have access to the full range of obesity treatment services will provide an avenue for addressing so many other costly obesity-related conditions such as Type II diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

Again, we thank you for your consideration of the amended language below and hope that the Committee will quickly act to approve SB 977. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me or OAC Policy Consultant Chris Gallagher at [chris@potomaccurrents.com](mailto:chris@potomaccurrents.com).

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Nadglowski, Jr.", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Joseph Nadglowski, Jr.  
OAC President and CEO

**OAC Suggested Amendments to SB 977: AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR SURGERY AND MEDICAL SERVICES RELATED TO TREATMENT OF OBESITY.**

Section 1 (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2023) (a) (1) As used in this section, "bariatric surgery" means surgical changes to the digestive system to help ~~an obese~~ A patient WITH OBESITY lose weight;

(3) "Medical services" means THE COVERAGE AND TREATMENT OF prescription ~~drug~~ DRUGS ~~treatment~~ APPROVED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION TO TREAT OBESITY ON AN OUTPATIENT BASIS and nutritional counseling; ...

(5) "~~Obese~~" OBESITY means a body mass index of thirty or higher.

(b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall provide medical assistance for (1) bariatric surgery and related medical services for Medicaid and HUSKY B beneficiaries with severe obesity, and (2) medical services for ~~obese~~ Medicaid and HUSKY B beneficiaries with a body mass index greater than thirty-five, provided such beneficiaries otherwise meet conditions set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for such surgery and medical services. If necessary, the commissioner may amend the Medicaid state plan and the state plan for the Children's Health Insurance Program to implement the provisions of this section.