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Public Employees Insurance Agency
601 57th St., SE, Suite 2
Charleston, WV 25304-2345

Dear Director Cunningham,

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is deeply disappointed by the decision from the West Virginia Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA) to drop coverage for FDA-approved anti-obesity medications (AOMs) under the state employees insurance plan.

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 518 members in West Virginia.

West Virginia ranks 1st in states impacted by obesity. More than 41% of adults in West Virginia have obesity, and more than 33% of adults have overweight. The state must provide its residents with safe, effective and accessible options for obesity management. State employees have benefited from AOMs under the current program and we applauded the state for being forward thinking in their coverage approach. However, the PEIA's decision to eliminate coverage for AOMs effective March 15th 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 ensure meaningful patient 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 PEIA 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

The mission of the Obesity Action Coalition is to elevate and empower those affected by obesity

money, but to improve the health and well-being of people. We request that PEIA continue to negotiate an equitable and accessible 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 black ink, appearing to read "Joe Nadglowski". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "J" and "N".

Joseph Nadglowski, Jr.
OAC President and CEO