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March 15, 2014

Health Care Authority  
626 8th Ave SE  
P.O. Box 42712  
Olympia, WA 98504-2712

Attention: Christine Masters at [shtap@hca.wa.gov](mailto:shtap@hca.wa.gov)

Dear Members of the Washington State Health Care Authority:

On behalf of the nearly 50,000 members of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), I am pleased to provide comments in response to the February 28, 2014 notice regarding proposed topics for review by the Washington State Health Care Authority's (HCA) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) program. The OAC's comments will focus on bariatric surgery for those affected by obesity.

Evidence-based literature clearly demonstrate that people affected by obesity can substantially improve their health and quality of life when they have access to a continuum of medically necessary treatment – including behavioral, nutritional, pharmaceutical, psychosocial and surgical treatment. Even a 5 to 10 percent weight-loss produces clinically significant reductions in risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, heart disease, mental illness, lipid disorders, pulmonary disease (obstructive sleep apnea and restrictive lung disease), and certain cancers.

Throughout its existence, the OAC has learned from our membership that there is no "one-size-fits-all approach to treating obesity." Nationwide, OAC members are advocating on the state and federal level for access to all evidence-based treatment options for the disease of obesity. More than 40 states across the country provide bariatric surgery coverage for their state employees and nearly every state Medicaid program offers this benefit for its low-income residents. We are pleased that Washington State can be counted among these states that recognize the benefits associated with bariatric surgery for their state employees and Medicaid recipients.

Therefore, it is our hope that the Washington State HCA is simply evaluating the growing evidence in support of metabolic and bariatric surgery and the tremendous possibilities that this particular intervention holds for those in the early stages of obesity (body mass index between 30 and 34.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). The OAC encourages HCA members to carefully review the evidence and practice guidelines that are included in the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery's formal comments on the February 28th notice. We believe that this evidence clearly speaks to the necessity of maintaining the bariatric surgery benefit for Washington state employees.

On behalf of the more than 900 OAC members in the State of Washington, I thank you for your consideration of the OAC's comments on this issue. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact either me, or the OAC's Washington Policy Consultant Christopher Gallagher at 571-235-6475 or via email at [chris@potomaccurrents.com](mailto:chris@potomaccurrents.com). Thank you.

Sincerely,

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

Joe Nadglowski  
President & CEO  
Obesity Action Coalition