

August 20, 2025

Governor Mike DeWine
Vern Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6117
Attn: Giles Allen, Director of Legislative Affairs

Dear Governor DeWine,

On behalf of the tens of thousands of patients we collectively represent, we request your support to ensure that Ohioans affected by the chronic disease of obesity have access to the full range of treatment options, including new GLP-1 medications.

Unfortunately, Ohio is moving backward, not forward with regard to helping those with obesity manage their condition which, if left untreated, is linked to the development of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancers and many other serious, chronic, and costly diseases.

In late April, the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) announced, with little prior notice or explanation, that GLP-1 coverage for obesity as part of the state employee health plan would end on July 1, 2025. While most state employee programs negotiate directly with manufacturers for rebates on GLP-1s, our understanding is that DAS never bothered to pursue this known cost-reducing option which would save the state millions of dollars.

The DAS announcement prompted Rep. Josh Williams to introduce [HB 388](#) which allows for continued coverage of GLP-1 medications for obesity in the state employee health plan via a rebate reimbursement program. GLP-1s should not be abruptly discontinued as treatment interruptions can reverse the weight and health benefits already achieved.

Rep. Williams has personal experience with the life-changing success that GLP-1 coverage can bring: he has lost more than 100 pounds in the last two years and, by his own account, his health has improved immeasurably.

We contend that GLP-1s should be covered by insurance in the same manner that medications for other chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease, are automatically included as part of the pharmaceutical benefit. However, we support HB 388 as a means for access and will continue working to restore the prior GLP-1 state employee coverage.

In addition to the GLP-1 access issues facing state employees, Ohio Medicaid still does not provide GLP-1 coverage for those with obesity and overweight. We appreciate that Rep. Williams publicly committed to exploring the idea of Medicaid coverage in the future, as stated during his [June 26 news conference](#) introducing HB 388.

The first step is for the Department of Medicaid to remove the prohibition against coverage for obesity medications (OMs), as outlined in [§5160-9-03](#) of the Ohio Administrative Code. This outdated and discriminatory prohibitory language stops Medicaid from using the regular coverage consideration process for OMs.

During a meeting on May 9, 2025, Medicaid representatives did **not** indicate that they would remove the Administrative Code prohibitory language without a legislative directive, although they have the power to do so. This language prevents Medicaid beneficiaries affected by obesity from becoming healthier. A healthier population uses fewer medical services and saves state dollars.

Obesity impacts a substantial number of Ohioans. [Seven out of ten](#) are experiencing obesity or overweight. And there is a strong correlation between obesity and type 2 diabetes: [25 percent](#) of all adult Ohioans have diagnosed diabetes or prediabetes.

It should also be noted that a healthier workforce is a more productive workforce. A [2023 Buckeye Institute study](#) found obesity has pushed some 32,000 Ohioans out of the labor force. On average, Ohio employees with obesity miss work 13 times more days than their colleagues.

Multiple studies have noted how access to obesity medications lowers healthcare costs and improves outcomes. A recently-released study from Aon gathered data from more than 100,000 prescribed GLP-1 users and [found a 44% reduction in risk of hospitalizations from major cardiovascular issues](#) after two years, along with a host of other reductions in claims and a decrease in medical spend growth for those patients.

Governor DeWine, thank you for considering our two requests. First, we urge your support for HB 388 to provide some GLP-1 access for state employees. Second, we ask you to direct Medicaid to remove the Ohio Administrative Code prohibition against coverage of obesity medicines. Our understanding is that the Department has the authority to do this, and a legislative mandate is unnecessary.

Just like cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, obesity is not a choice. It requires committed, long-term treatment. We hope to discuss this matter with you further. Please contact the Obesity Action Coalition Policy Advisor, Chris Gallagher, at chris@potomaccurrents.com, or the American Diabetes Association's Senior Director of State Government Affairs, Gary Dougherty, at GDougherty@diabetes.org with any questions or to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

- Alliance for Women's Health & Prevention
- American Academy of Pediatrics - Ohio Chapter
- American Diabetes Association
- W. Scott Butsch, MD, MSc - Director of Obesity Medicine, Bariatric and Metabolic Institute, Cleveland Clinic
- Stephen Cook, MD, MPH, FAAP, DABOM – Pediatrician, Columbus, OH | Advocacy Committee, The Obesity Society
- Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition
- Roy Kim, MD - Head of Pediatric Endocrinology, Cleveland Clinic Children's
- Donna and Jim Leitzel – patients, Columbus
- Northeast Ohio Association of Hispanic Health
- Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition
- Obesity Action Coalition
- The Obesity Society
- Ohio/Kentucky Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
- Ohio Life Sciences Association
- Ohio River Region Society of Endocrinology
- Partnership to Advance Cardiovascular Health