



November 16, 2005

Governor Mitch Daniels
Office of the Governor
Statehouse
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797

Dear Governor Daniels:

I am writing to request your assistance in improving access to the treatment of morbid obesity through weight-loss surgery in the state of Indiana.

The OAC is a non-profit patient organization dedicated to educating and advocating for those affected by obesity. It is our mission to elevate and empower those affected by obesity through education, advocacy and support. By strictly representing the interests and concerns of obese patients, the OAC is a unique organization.

Obesity is a serious health epidemic that targets one in four Americans. Those affected by obesity often experience or are at a much higher risk for a variety of obesity related illnesses including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and some cancers (endometrial, breast and colon). In Indiana, more than 1.5 million are considered obese (30 pounds or more overweight) and more than 300,000 are considered morbidly obese (100 pounds or more over ideal body weight). It is estimated that Indiana's obese population accounted for more than \$1.64 billion in medical costs related to their obesity.

As you may be aware, insurance coverage of weight-loss surgery is mandated by Indiana law (Indiana Public Law 196) and the **OAC strongly supports this mandate**. The mandate requires that the surgical treatment of morbid obesity be offered after specific requirements are met. However, the OAC is specifically concerned that one requirement, 18-months of consecutive physician supervised, non-surgical treatment for weight-loss, is excessive and denies clinically-appropriate patients access to weight-loss surgery. Although most insurers outside of Indiana require some form of physician supervised weight-loss prior to approving surgery, the typical length of such requirements is six months or less.

Adding to the challenge of Indiana Public Law 196 is the fact that most insurers specifically exclude payment for physician supervised medical weight management services under their policies. This means a person who was identified as a candidate for weight-loss surgery in Indiana would have to pay out-of-pocket for 18 months of physician supervised medical weight management therapy. It is estimated that a person's out-of-pocket expenses for such services would range from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

The OAC respectfully requests your assistance and advice in revising the required 18-month requirement currently included in Indiana's mandate for access to the treatment of morbid obesity. Your support in this matter would be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information or be of assistance on any other obesity-related issues. I can be reached via phone at (800) 717-3117 or e-mail at jnadglowski@obesityaction.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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

Joseph Nadglowski Jr.
President & CEO

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