



November 16, 2005

Governor Sonny Purdue
Georgia State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Purdue:

I am writing to request your assistance in improving access to obesity management services including weight-loss surgery in the state of Georgia.

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 Georgia, more than 2 million are considered obese (30 pounds or more overweight) and more than 400,000 are considered morbidly obese (100 pounds or more over ideal body weight). It is estimated that Georgia's obese population accounted for more than \$2.13 billion in medical costs related to their obesity.

As you may be aware, Georgia law states under its "Morbid Obesity Anti-discrimination Act" (Georgia General Assembly Code 33-24-59.7) that health insurers **may** offer coverage for the treatment of morbid obesity. The mandate (which like all mandates, does not apply to companies that are self-insured – ie. most large companies) does **not** require that the treatment of morbid obesity be offered. It only states that it may be offered. Unfortunately, most employers (including the State of Georgia) and insurers do not offer the coverage of the treatment of morbid obesity. The OAC would like to see Georgia law revised to require health insurers to offer coverage for the treatment of morbid obesity to guarantee access to those affected by the disease of obesity.

The OAC believes that lack of insurance coverage for obesity negatively impacts the quality of health and life of the citizens of Georgia by denying them access to needed medical care. Obesity is a complex disease requiring treatment. The medical treatment of obesity decreases mortality, improves or resolves obesity-related illnesses and improves quality of life. Denying patients and their physicians proven options for treatment (medical weight management and weight-loss surgery) is an ill-advised, short-term economic decision by Georgia-based insurers and employers that endangers the long-term health of many citizens of Georgia.

The OAC respectfully requests your assistance and advice in improving access to the treatments of obesity in Georgia. 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.
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