



March 7, 2006

Senator Joseph J. Crisco
Legislative Office Building Room 2800
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Crisco:

I am writing to introduce you to the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) and urge that you support Raised S.B. No. 552 mandating insurance coverage of treatments for morbid obesity.

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. As an organization consisting of those affected by obesity throughout the United States including citizens of Connecticut, we strongly believe that in addition to efforts preventing obesity, there needs to be increased focus on treating this complicated disease.

Obesity is a serious health epidemic that targets more than 30 percent of Americans and nearly 20 percent of the citizens of Connecticut. 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).

For the morbidly obese (those more than 100 pounds overweight), bariatric surgery (also known as weight-loss surgery or gastric bypass) is a life-saving and life-changing experience. Scientific evidence proves that bariatric surgery extends the lives of patients, causes significant weight loss, reduces or resolves nearly all of the obesity-related illnesses listed above and tremendously increases quality of life. In addition, bariatric surgery is cost-effective. With the reduction or elimination of the many obesity-related illnesses, long-term health costs are greatly reduced and studies have shown that prescription medication costs alone decrease 70 percent or more post-surgery. Additional evidence of the effectiveness of bariatric surgery as a therapy can be seen in Medicare's recent decision to expand access to this important treatment through a national coverage decision. The guidelines and rules determined by Medicare are included in Raised S.B. No. 552.

The exclusion of the treatment of morbid obesity is short-sighted as it not only hurts the morbidly obese residents of Connecticut by denying them access to this life-saving therapy, but ultimately increases the employer and tax dollars required to fund treatment of future obesity-related illnesses. The OAC respectfully requests that you support SB552 mandating insurers cover treatments for morbid obesity. The obese face discrimination and bias in nearly every part of their lives including their healthcare, please help us change this by supporting SB552.

Your support in this matter would be greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information, specific scientific studies to confirm the details presented above or be of assistance on any other obesity-related issues. I can be reached via phone at (800) 717-3117 or via e-mail at jnadglowski@obesityaction.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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