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May 18, 2006

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Blagojevich:

I am writing to request your assistance in improving access to obesity management services, including bariatric surgery (weight-loss surgery), currently denied to many citizens of Illinois.

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 Illinois, more than 2.9 million are considered obese (30 pounds or more overweight) and more than 600,000 are considered morbidly obese (100 pounds or more over ideal body weight). It is estimated that Illinois' obese population accounted for more than \$3.4 billion in medical costs related to their obesity.

As you may be aware, many Illinois-based insurers and employers do not provide or have eliminated insurance coverage for obesity management services, including bariatric surgery. The OAC believes that this decision negatively impacts the quality of health and life of the citizens of Illinois 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 nutrition therapy, medical weight management and weight-loss surgery) is an ill-advised, short-term economic decision by Illinois-based insurers and employers that endangers the long-term health of many citizens of Illinois.

The OAC respectfully requests your assistance and advice in convincing Illinois-based insurers and employers to provide access to obesity management services and bariatric surgery. Recently, Medicare, after an extensive review, greatly expanded access to bariatric surgery and we would like to see a similar expansion by Illinois-based insurers and employers. 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