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January 8, 2024

California Senate Health Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 3310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Senate Health Committee Hearing on Measures Heard on January 10, 2024

Dear Chair Eggman, Vice Chair Nguyen, and Member of the Senate Health Committee,

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment in support of policy proposals that improve coverage for evidence-based obesity care. Obesity is a growing chronic disease in California with more than 28% of the population living with the disease and another 34% with overweight. Altogether, that's more than 62% of people living in California who experience overweight or obesity.<sup>[1]</sup>

The OAC is the leading national non-profit dedicated to serving people living with obesity through awareness, support, education, and advocacy. Our vision is to create a society where all individuals are treated with respect and without discrimination or bias regardless of their size or weight. We strive for those affected by the disease of obesity to have the right to access safe and effective treatment options. OAC has a strong and growing membership of more than 80,000 individuals across the United States and 5,440 members in California.

Obesity is a complex, multifactorial, common, serious, relapsing, and costly chronic disease that serves as a major risk factor for developing conditions such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, renal disease, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, and 13 types of cancer (which make up 40 percent of all cancers diagnosed).<sup>[2]</sup> And as such, this disease requires treatment and management just like diabetes, cancer, or high blood pressure.

Obesity is driven by strong biology, not by choice and is often the root cause and driver of other health complications. A recent report found that treating obesity can reduce diabetes (-8.9%), hypertension (-2.3%), heart disease (-2.6%), cancer (-1.3%), and disability (-4.7%) over 10 years in private insurance coverage and Medicare.<sup>[3]</sup>

For these reasons, we appreciate the focus that California policymakers are placing on finding solutions to address the obesity epidemic in the state. These efforts will hopefully ensure that all Californians have access to all evidence-based obesity treatment avenues.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel to contact me or OAC Policy Consultant Chris Gallagher via email at [chris@potomaccurrents.com](mailto:chris@potomaccurrents.com). Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Nadglowski, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph Nadglowski, Jr.  
OAC President and CEO

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<sup>[1]</sup> Trust for America's Health 2023 State of Obesity Report

<sup>[2]</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/obesity/index>. Accessed April 26, 2023

<sup>[3]</sup> Benefits of Medicare Coverage for Weight Loss Drugs. By Alison Sexton Ward, PhD, Bryan Tysinger, PhD, PhuongGiang Nguyen, Dana Goldman, PhD and Darius Lakdawalla, PhD. USC Schaeffer, 2023.