



April 10, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), The Obesity Society (TOS) and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) urge you and your Administration to support patient access to and coverage of comprehensive obesity care. Obesity is a complex, multi-factorial, and chronic disease that requires a comprehensive approach to care including prevention and wellness, nutrition counseling, intensive behavioral therapy, FDA-approved obesity medication, endo-bariatric procedures, and metabolic and bariatric surgery. It is the second leading preventable cause of death in our country and is associated with a large number of co-morbid conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disorders and other largely preventable illnesses. Care should therefore not be seen as simply having the goal of reducing body weight but should additionally be focused on improving overall health and quality of life.

New York ranks 44th in states impacted by obesity with 29.5% of New York adults living with obesity and another 35.2% affected by overweight. Obesity and diabetes disproportionately affect people of color and of lower socioeconomic status which are important factors that often determine access to health care. Disparities further exacerbate New York's obesity statistics and health outcomes with 36.2% of black and 33.5% of Hispanic New Yorkers are living with obesity compared to 28.9% of white New Yorkers. Persons with low incomes are more likely to be Medicaid recipients or uninsured, have poor-quality health care, and seek health care less often; when they do seek health care, it is more likely to be for an emergency. The total cost of obesity in the United States is \$1.7 trillion and healthcare costs are 34% higher for people with obesity. Obesity costs New York \$37.3 billion annually in extra medical costs, disability, and reduced productivity. Expanding access to obesity care will help decrease the numerous illnesses and comorbidities that plague New Yorkers, while improving health outcomes and healthcare savings.

Furthermore, obesity is often misunderstood, which contributes to both discrimination and care issues. It is important to educate the public, health professionals, and policy makers about obesity as a disease, the issues impacting individuals affected by obesity and the treatments available to help. Policymakers must ensure that people who are affected by obesity have access to affordable, individualized medical coverage for science-based treatments in the same way other chronic diseases are managed, allowing them to be treated with dignity, respect, and equality that is offered to their peers.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me via email at chris@potomaccurrents.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Chris Gallagher, Public Policy Consultant
Obesity Action Coalition, The Obesity Society, and American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery