February 13, 2024

As the Executive Director for the National Black Nurses Association, and on behalf of our esteemed President Dr. Sheldon D. Fields, Board of Directors, and our Health Policy committee the National Black Nurses Association would like to thank you for your dedication to the State of Maryland.

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) is a distinguished organization dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of the Black community through leadership, advocacy, and professional development. As the premier professional organization for Back nurses, the NBNA represent thousands of nurses across the nation who are committed to providing culturally competent care, promoting health equity, and addressing healthcare disparities.

We, at the National Black Nurses Association, are writing to lend our support for the coverage of FDA-approved anti-obesity medications, including those of the GLP-1 class, for patients diagnosed with obesity or overweight who are covered under Maryland Medicaid. As an organization dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of the Black community, we recognize the importance of addressing obesity as a chronic disease.

Obesity has long been acknowledged as a significant health concern, with detrimental effects on individuals and communities. It is imperative that we acknowledge and treat obesity on par with other chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. The American Medical Association and numerous primary care and specialty societies have already recognized obesity as a chronic disease for over a decade.

This year, we have witnessed several medical organizations, including the AMA, update their obesity guidelines and practices to reflect the availability of highly effective medical treatments. These treatments have the potential to significantly benefit patients by reducing obesity-related complications and improving overall health outcomes.

Studies have shown that pharmacological treatment can lead to notable improvements in obesity-related complications, including dyslipidemia, heart failure, fatty liver and hepatic steatosis, cardiovascular disease, and the prevention and remission of type 2 diabetes. These conditions have a disproportionate impact on minoritized and marginalized racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups in Maryland, including children. Addressing obesity and its complications is essential in reducing the disparities in health outcomes within our communities.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the federal Office of Personnel Management has taken a proactive approach by requiring obesity care and treatment, including pharmacotherapy options, for all federal employees starting January 1, 2023. As a state known for its forward-thinking and innovative healthcare policies, it is time for Maryland to align its obesity policies.

with this national standard, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Maryland is already shouldering the financial burden of obesity and its complications. By expanding access to effective treatments, we have a unique opportunity to make a tangible difference in improving health outcomes for individuals affected by obesity. With your support, we can advance the well-being of Marylanders and contribute to a healthier future for all.

Kind regards,
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