



"Advocating for Nurse Practitioners since 1992"

2/28/25

Regarding: SB 876 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity

Position: Support

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland (NPAM) to express our **support for SB 876 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity** which aims to ensure equitable and comprehensive coverage for patients with obesity and chronic weight management needs.

On behalf of the over 860 members of the Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland (NPAM), we believe SB 876 is an important step in addressing the significant healthcare disparities faced by individuals struggling with obesity, particularly those reliant on Medicaid for their healthcare needs.

Obesity in the United States is an epidemic. In Maryland, 34.1% of adults (1) and 20.5% of children (2) have obesity and the prevalence has risen over the past decade. We are also aware that lower income groups are affected at higher rates.

Obesity is a complex chronic disease with serious health consequences, including increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. Despite its status as a disease, access to comprehensive obesity treatment options, including newly approved medications, remains limited. Lack of coverage by Maryland Medical Assistance exacerbates health inequities and perpetuates the stigma against affected individuals.


SB 876 seeks to address health disparities by prohibiting restrictive coverage criteria for FDA-approved anti-obesity medications. This provision ensures that individuals with obesity have access to medications deemed safe and effective

by the FDA without unnecessary barriers. While these new medications have proven to be effective, they are costly. The price tag for this bill appears daunting. The bill allows for utilization management to ensure appropriateness of the medication use. Potential cost savings to the program are compelling when considering the reduction in diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other chronic medical conditions that can be achieved with successful treatment of obesity. Quality of life measures can be expected to improve for both teens and adults with successful treatment.

We also support the requirement for the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to provide written notice to Medicaid recipients about the coverage mandated by the bill is commendable. This notification ensures transparency and awareness among beneficiaries, empowering them to make informed decisions about their healthcare.

In conclusion, **SB 876 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity** represents a significant step forward in addressing the healthcare needs of individuals with obesity, particularly those from underserved communities. We urge you to support this legislation to promote health equity and improve access to evidence-based treatments for obesity.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Malinda D. Duke in black ink.

Malinda D. Duke CPNP-PC, CDCES
Executive Director, NPAM
5372 Iron Pen Place
Columbia, MD 21044 NPAMexdir@npedu.com
443-367-0277 (office)
410-404-1747 (mobile)

(1). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. (12 September 2024). <https://cdc.gov/obesity/data-and-statistics/adult-obesity-prevalence-maps.html>

(2). Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. <https://stateofchildhoodobesity.org/state-data/?state=md>