

February 27th, 2025

Maryland Senate
Finance Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) Chesapeake Chapter, we are writing to express our **support of SB 876 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity** which would expand the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to provide comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity. This legislation is an essential step toward addressing the growing obesity epidemic among Maryland residents, particularly among children and adolescents, who are increasingly affected by this chronic disease.

Pediatric obesity is a major public health concern that can lead to severe long-term health consequences, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and mental health disorders. Without early intervention, many children with obesity continue to struggle with the condition into adulthood, increasing their risk of developing life-threatening illnesses. However, access to medically necessary treatments such as intensive behavioral therapy, nutritional counseling, and, in severe cases, FDA-approved anti-obesity medications or bariatric surgery is often limited due to financial and insurance barriers.

SB 876 will help ensure that all Medicaid recipients, including children and adolescents, have access to evidence-based treatments for obesity. By providing coverage for intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and FDA-approved anti-obesity medications, this bill takes a proactive approach to combatting obesity and preventing future health complications.

Expanding Medicaid coverage for obesity treatment will:

- Improve pediatric health outcomes by enabling early intervention and lifelong healthy habits.
- Reduce long-term healthcare costs by preventing obesity-related chronic conditions before they develop.
- Address health disparities by ensuring that low-income children and families have access to the same treatment options as those with private insurance.
- Support families and caregivers by providing necessary resources and guidance to help children achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Additionally, SB 876 ensures that Medicaid coverage criteria for obesity treatment will not be more restrictive than those for other covered medical conditions. This guarantees that children and adults alike receive the care they need without unnecessary barriers. The requirement for the Maryland Department of Health to notify beneficiaries about these new coverage options is another critical component, ensuring that families are informed of the resources available to them. Addressing obesity—particularly pediatric obesity—through Medicaid coverage is a forward-thinking, compassionate, and fiscally responsible solution that will benefit Maryland's children and families for generations to come.

For these reasons the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP extends our support **SB 876 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity** and requests a favorable report.

The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The Chesapeake Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners membership includes over 200 primary and acute care pediatric nurse practitioners who are committed to improving the health and advocating for Maryland's pediatric patients. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Chesapeake Chapter legislative committee or president, Dr. Yvette Laboy at mdchesnapnapleg@outlook.com.

Sincerely,

Yvette Laboy

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