



Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: HB 1489 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity

Date: March 13, 2025

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) acknowledges the important policy goals of House Bill 1489 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity, which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide comprehensive coverage for obesity treatment. However, MNA recognizes the complex fiscal considerations during these challenging budgetary times. We urge a balanced approach that weighs both healthcare needs and financial sustainability.

Obesity as a Critical Public Health Issue As frontline healthcare providers, nurses witness the significant impact of obesity on our patients' health and quality of life. Obesity is linked to numerous chronic conditions including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, sleep apnea, and certain types of cancer. These conditions affect quality of life and contribute to healthcare system costs.

Addressing Health Disparities Medicaid recipients experience higher rates of obesity and related conditions compared to the general population. The current coverage limitations create a treatment gap that may contribute to health disparities. Hb 1489 aims to provide Medicaid recipients access to treatment options similar to those available through private insurance, which could be a step toward health equity.

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Considerations MNA acknowledges the legitimate concerns regarding fiscal impact on the Medicaid program. Comprehensive obesity treatment coverage requires significant investment during a time of budget constraints. We support comprehensive fiscal analysis and thoughtful cost containment measures that preserve quality of care.

We recommend robust data collection to track both expenditures and health outcomes, enabling evidence-based program refinements that maximize benefits while controlling costs. Careful monitoring of utilization patterns will be essential to ensure appropriate use of higher-cost interventions.

While HB 1489 represents a promising approach to addressing an important public health challenge, MNA urges the committee to ensure that implementation doesn't compromise the program's ability to maintain current coverage levels. We support a favorable report only if the committee determines that these benefits can be provided without reducing the number of Marylanders covered by Medicaid.

If you have any questions please contact MNA's lobbyist William Kress, Esquire at bill@kresshammen.com.