



February 10, 2026

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Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 813 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Coverage for Treatment of Obesity

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Bagnell, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), we are pleased to express our support for **House Bill 813**. This legislation authorizes the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity, including intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for chronic weight management. By expanding access to evidence-based interventions, SB 496 recognizes obesity as a complex, chronic health condition requiring multidisciplinary care.

Psychologists play a critical role in the treatment of obesity through behavioral assessment, lifestyle intervention, motivational enhancement, and the treatment of co-occurring mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and disordered eating. Intensive behavioral therapy is widely recognized as a foundational component of effective weight management, and improved coverage will allow more Maryland residents—particularly those served by the Medical Assistance Program—to access these clinically appropriate services. Treating obesity early and comprehensively can significantly reduce the risk of serious medical and psychological complications while improving overall quality of life.

HB 813 also advances health equity by addressing barriers that disproportionately affect lower-income individuals, who often face higher rates of chronic illness but fewer treatment options. Allowing the Program to provide comprehensive coverage ensures that determinations of medical necessity are made in the same manner as for other covered conditions, reinforcing the principle that obesity deserves the same clinical attention as other chronic diseases. This approach supports prevention, reduces long-term health care costs, and promotes healthier communities across Maryland.

For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association respectfully urges a **favorable report on House Bill 813**. We appreciate the General Assembly's commitment to strengthening access to behavioral and medical health services and to advancing policies that support the well-being of all Maryland residents.

If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of MPA's Legislative Committee, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
President

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs