

February 17, 2026

RE: **HB 813**

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice-Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health Committee:

I wanted to first thank all of you for your work in public service and everything you do for our state.

My name is Mihir Patel. I am a physician board-certified in internal medicine and obesity medicine and a faculty member at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, practicing both as an obesity medicine specialist and primary care physician. My remarks are my personal professional opinion only and are not made on behalf of the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

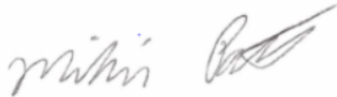
I have been a primary care physician for more than 10 years. Nine years ago, I was fortunate to have mentors who taught me obesity medicine. Since that time, I have sat with countless patients as they have told me about their weight loss journey, how they have tried everything, tried different diets, tried exercising, all while caring for their family, and maybe even working more than one job. I have the privilege telling them how obesity is not their fault of discussing how obesity is affected by one's own genetic predisposition, hunger and fullness signaling, food environment, microbiome, and other parts of human physiology that are not under an individual's direct control. That is where I can offer individuals anti-obesity medications and a constant presence to help them with their lifelong struggle to manage their weight.

When considering the power of anti-obesity medications, I think of several patients, but two come to mind. The first is a 72-year-old female with a history of a heart rhythm disturbance, sleep apnea (an obesity-related sleep disorder), a history of blood clots, a history of breast cancer, hypertension, and a previous knee replacement. She came to see me for weight management, and with the help of a patient assistance program, along with other therapies, we were able to address her weight struggles. Since then, her life has been completely transformed. Thoughts of food do not consume her; she is able to manage her cravings, portion sizes, and blood pressure. However, through weight loss accomplished with the help of anti-obesity pharmacotherapy, she was able to cure her sleep apnea, and she no longer needs her breathing machine at night. Then I think of a patient I saw last week. She is a 38-year-old female who deals with migraine headaches, bipolar disorder, chronic back pain and who suffered from weight gain early in life due to mental health medications she needed. She does not have coverage for anti-obesity medications. For the first patient, I can't help but think, "What if we were able to treat her earlier in life?" What if these therapies had been available to her earlier? Could we have prevented the development of blood clots, sleep apnea, or cancer?" For the second patient, I wonder if she is going to suffer the same fate and are we going to, thirty years later, still wonder if we could have done more to prevent serious life-changing chronic conditions. There are at least 200 medical conditions we know of that are directly related to obesity. Additionally, we know that a BMI of over 40 decreases life expectancy by 8-10 years, the same amount as smoking.



In my view, this all signifies that addressing obesity is the future of primary care and medicine as a whole. Rather than waiting to treat hypertension, gout, heart rhythm disturbances, kidney disease, liver disease, arthritis, or cancer, we should tackle obesity and reduce the inflammation that is the driving force for these chronic conditions. Maryland has consistently been a leader in the healthcare sector, especially in terms of quality care. As obesity medicine represents the new frontier of quality healthcare, recipients of the Medical Assistance Program in Maryland truly deserve this therapy. Please support them with a favorable vote for House Bill 813.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mihir Patel".

Mihir Patel, MD, MS, FACP
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Maryland School of Medicine

