

# MedChi

*The Maryland State Medical Society*

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TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Robbyn Lewis

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman  
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RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 986 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity*

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The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** House Bill 986. This bill only applies to the Medicaid program (not the commercial market) and requires comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity, which includes coverage for intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and FDA-approved anti-obesity medication (i.e., medication approved by the federal FDA with an indication for chronic weight management in patients with obesity).

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the obesity prevalence in the United States has increased from 30.5% (1999-2000) to 41.9% (2017 – March 2020). During the same time, the prevalence of severe obesity increased from 4.7% to 9.2%. Conditions related to obesity include heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. These are among the leading causes of preventable, premature death. The estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the United States was nearly \$173 billion in 2019. Medical costs for adults who had obesity were \$1,861 higher than medical costs for people with healthy weight.

Improving population health is a key goal of the Maryland Total Cost of Care Model. Under the Model, Maryland is expected to progressively transform care delivery across the health care system with the objective of improving health and quality of care. Addressing diabetes is one of the key goals under population health and obesity is recognized by the State as a key risk factor in developing diabetes. As such, MedChi supports House Bill 986 and believes that it will continue to advance Maryland's current efforts under population health and that, in the long-term, it will result in cost savings to the State by avoiding those conditions most associated with obesity.