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2314 Benson Mill Road
Sparks, Maryland 21152
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Unfavorable HB 1031

Health Insurance – Required Coverage – Prescription Weight Loss Drugs

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and HGO Committee Members,

I am Emily Tarsell, a mother, licensed mental health therapist and founder of Health Choice Maryland. I write to ask for an Unfavorable vote for HB 1031 for the following reasons.

1. It is well known that there are multiple reasons for obesity. Taking a drug or a shot for obesity does not address the underlying cause/causes for any particular individual.

2. Taking a drug like Ozempic comes with a host of possible side effects some of which are very serious. It has been said by University of Columbia physicians that, *“You could call it a drug of abuse.”*

3. If one takes Ozempic, it is a life-long commitment since the weight gain rapidly returns when one goes off of the drug.

4. About 30% of the US population is obese. That is 100,000 people. Wouldn't the drug companies love to see all of these folks on drugs for life which would be a bonanza for Pharma long term profits, consequences to the individual be damned.

5. Ozempic costs about \$1200 a month. While some might argue that is the reason that insurance should pay for it, we argue that such payment should be denied because it is not cost effective in the long term. Many people go off of the drug due to side effects only to find themselves back where they started with weight gain. Others develop serious side effects which require more costly medical intervention. And the increased costs from expensive drugs adds to the already burgeoning cost of medical care for all of us.

6. It isn't just about the cost, however. This bill is premature since better solutions to weight loss and the obesity epidemic are on the horizon. The new administration will be addressing reasons for obesity with changes in the food and farming industries, the environment and various treatment options.

7. For those whose need is urgent and life threatening, coverage for medically necessary treatment is already required.

These are some of the reasons that we ask that you vote **Unfavorable for HB 1031.**

Thank you.

Emily Tarsell, LCPC