

**Written Testimony of the
Health Equity Coalition for Chronic Disease
In Support of
SB 496 “Maryland Medical Assistance Program --
Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity”**

**Maryland Senate Finance Committee
February 17, 2026**

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Obesity is a complex, chronic disease that reflects deep inequities in access to care, prevention, and treatment. Unfortunately, Maryland currently does not allow Medicaid coverage of anti-obesity medications (AOMs). With nearly one in four Marylanders relying on Medicaid for their health care, this gap in coverage leaves far too many patients without access to medically necessary treatment.

But we have an opportunity to change course by favorably reporting Senate Bill 496 out of committee. The bill authorizes the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity, including intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and FDA-approved anti-obesity medications for chronic weight management. As we wrote in our recently released [policy brief](#), expanding coverage of evidence-based obesity treatments -- including AOMs -- would improve health outcomes, advance health equity, and reduce long-term healthcare costs.

SB 496 is not only medically sound -- it is urgently needed. This bill reflects modern scientific consensus, addresses longstanding inequities, and gives Maryland an opportunity to reduce preventable chronic disease costs while improving health outcomes for thousands of residents. This bill represents a critical step toward improving health outcomes and closing long-standing gaps in care.

By expanding Medicaid coverage, Maryland can ensure patients have access to the full range of evidence-based obesity treatments that can change the trajectory of their health and their lives. **We urge the swift passage of this legislation.**

Health Equity Coalition for Chronic Disease
<https://healthequityaction.org/>