

SB0496\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

02/17/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0496 POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity**

**TO:** Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0496, **Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity**

The Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition has found: <sup>1</sup>

Obesity presents a formidable and complex public health challenge—this pervasive condition affects over 123 million adults and children in the United States and contributes to over 200 comorbidities including Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and chronic kidney disease. Despite the gravity of this public health crisis, insurance coverage for obesity treatment remains inadequate, driving up healthcare costs.

Providing comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity—including, but not limited to, FDA-approved medications (GLP-1s), behavioral therapy, nutrition counseling, and bariatric surgery—offers significant health, economic, and productivity benefits for employers, insurers, and society. Evidence suggests that while initial, short-term costs for these treatments are higher, they lead to long-term cost savings, a healthier workforce, and improved quality of life. <sup>2</sup>

Maryland can not only improve residents health it can lower its costs in provision of treatment for the effect of obesity on health by passing this bill.

The bill will authorize, beginning January 1, 2027, the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity; and requiring the Maryland Department of Health to provide notice to Program recipients if the Department elects to provide the comprehensive coverage.

Obesity rates in Maryland by county rate from 43.4% of Charles County residents to 24.20% in Montgomery County. <sup>3</sup> These rates mean increased costs for medical care. Maryland can bend the curve downwards by passing this important bill.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0496.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.diabetespac.org/comprehensive-coverage-to-combat-obesity>

<sup>2</sup> Google AI Search “benefits of providing comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity”

<sup>3</sup> [https://datacommons.org/ranking/Percent\\_Person\\_Obesity/County/geold/24?h=geold%2F24&unit=%25](https://datacommons.org/ranking/Percent_Person_Obesity/County/geold/24?h=geold%2F24&unit=%25)