



February 10, 2026

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Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice Chair  
Finance Committee  
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Bill: Senate Bill 496 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Coverage for Treatment of Obesity**

**Position: SUPPORT**

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

On behalf of the Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), we are pleased to express our support for **Senate Bill 496**. This legislation authorizes the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity, including intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for chronic weight management. By expanding access to evidence-based interventions, SB 496 recognizes obesity as a complex, chronic health condition requiring multidisciplinary care.

Psychologists play a critical role in the treatment of obesity through behavioral assessment, lifestyle intervention, motivational enhancement, and the treatment of co-occurring mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and disordered eating. Intensive behavioral therapy is widely recognized as a foundational component of effective weight management, and improved coverage will allow more Maryland residents—particularly those served by the Medical Assistance Program—to access these clinically appropriate services. Treating obesity early and comprehensively can significantly reduce the risk of serious medical and psychological complications while improving overall quality of life.

SB 496 also advances health equity by addressing barriers that disproportionately affect lower-income individuals, who often face higher rates of chronic illness but fewer treatment options. Allowing the Program to provide comprehensive coverage ensures that determinations of medical necessity are made in the same manner as for other covered conditions, reinforcing the principle that obesity deserves the same clinical attention as other chronic diseases. This approach supports prevention, reduces long-term health care costs, and promotes healthier communities across Maryland.

For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 496. We appreciate the General Assembly's commitment to strengthening access to behavioral and medical health services and to advancing policies that support the well-being of all Maryland residents.

If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of MPA's Legislative Committee, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, at [mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,

*Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.  
President

*Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs