

**Oral Testimony in Support of SB 496 (2 minutes)**

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**Maryland Senate Finance Committee**

**Support — SB 496: Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Coverage for the Treatment of Obesity**

Good Afternoon Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Committee.

My name is Amy Hinojosa, and I am testifying today on behalf of MANA, A National Latina Organization, in strong support of Senate Bill 496.

SB 496 is about something simple but urgent: treating obesity like the chronic disease that it is—not like a personal failing, and not like an optional condition that people should “handle on their own.”

Obesity is a complex medical disease linked to more than 200 serious health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, kidney disease, and certain cancers.

Yet today, too many Marylanders—especially those enrolled in Medicaid—cannot access the full range of medically recommended care.

SB 496 fixes that by allowing Maryland Medicaid to cover comprehensive obesity treatment, including intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and FDA-approved anti-obesity medications.

For Latino families, this matters deeply. Nationally, obesity rates are disproportionately high among Hispanic adults, reflecting longstanding inequities in access to healthy food, preventive care, and consistent treatment.

And when obesity goes untreated, Medicaid doesn’t save money—it simply pays later, and pays more, through preventable diabetes complications, hospitalizations, disability, and long-term chronic disease care.

Medical experts agree: early obesity treatment can significantly reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and other costly outcomes.

This bill is also important for patient safety. Across the country, the growing market for counterfeit and illegally compounded GLP-1 drugs is putting communities at risk—especially communities that are locked out of legitimate, FDA-approved treatment. Expanding Medicaid coverage reduces that dangerous incentive.

Finally, SB 496 includes a common-sense safeguard: Maryland Medicaid may use utilization management to ensure treatment is medically necessary, just as it does for other conditions.

In short: this bill is about health equity, cost-effective prevention, and treating Marylanders with dignity.

MANA respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 496.

Thank you.