

**Written Testimony**  
**Jocelyn Swanson-Apollon, MD**  
**Support for SB 496**  
**Maryland House Committee on Health**  
**1:00 PM ET Hearing**

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

My name is **Jocelyn Swanson-Apollon, MD., MPH**, I am speaking on behalf of the Obesity Medicine Association in support of Senate Bill 496.

SB 496 aims to ensure that Maryland Medicaid patients have access to comprehensive and evidence-based care to treat obesity as the chronic disease it is.

Currently, many lower-income patients face compounded health risks and rates of premature mortality, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and hypertension due to the inability to access obesity treatments that could significantly improve their lives.

The statistics highlight the need: In America, lower socioeconomic status is associated with a 31% higher odds of being overweight and 45% higher odds of obesity. In Maryland, only about 32 percent of adults maintain a normal weight, while the majority struggle with overweight or obesity. Nationally, the obesity prevalence is 40%.

These figures are not just numbers; they represent patients, my patients in the communities I serve as an Urgent Care and Primary Care physician. Many of my patients present with poorly controlled hypertension and cardiovascular disease secondary to obesity. We can't treat one without addressing and treating the underlying issue, Obesity.

The health effects of obesity are socially patterned and more severe in under-resourced populations. Access to obesity treatment is key for our Medicaid patients.

Without access to appropriate treatment, these conditions often worsen over time, resulting in higher healthcare costs and poorer health outcomes.

SB 496 would aim to address health disparities in the Medicaid population. It supports access to a variety of care options, including behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and FDA-approved obesity medications for beneficiaries.

Increased access to obesity care enables my patients to achieve meaningful improvements in weight loss and overall health, including reduced cardiovascular risk and better management of related conditions.

SB 496 recognizes that obesity care is not one-size-fits-all. Patients need access to multiple treatment options so that their care can be tailored to their individual needs.

At its core, the bill is about improving access for one of the more vulnerable Medicaid populations, advancing health equity, and providing patients with the tools they need to manage a serious, chronic condition to improve their health and well-being.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support for SB 496.

Thank you for your time and consideration.