



April 15, 2024

The Honorable Todd Huston
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Indiana Statehouse
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Speaker Huston,

The Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP) respectfully requests your recommendation and support for an interim study committee on obesity and its impacts across Indiana. As an organization focused on women's preventive health, AWHP recognizes that there is an important link between obesity and women's health. We believe this study is an important and necessary step to expand our understanding of the physical, social, and financial impacts of obesity on Hoosiers—especially women living in Indiana. Through this forum, the committee should also investigate the impact this disease has on Indiana's healthcare system and economy more broadly, including employers operating within the state. We believe that this information will be critical to guide future policymaking efforts to address obesity in Indiana.

Obesity is a chronic, treatable disease that affects nearly [4 in 10 women](#) in Indiana and has a [disproportionate impact](#) on women of color. It is associated with over 200 other chronic conditions, including many that specifically affect women throughout their lives, such as breast and ovarian cancers as well as fertility issues. Collectively, healthcare costs related to obesity accounted for nearly \$240 million in increased Medicaid spending in Indiana and in 2022 cost employers across the state more than \$1.2 billion, according to a [Global Data report](#).

Women with obesity are also more likely to face harmful social stigma and discrimination. The same [GlobalData](#) report found that women in Indiana with overweight or obesity earn 9% less in wages, on average, than women of a healthy weight. Women with obesity are also [less likely](#) to be promoted at work, and as many as [69% of women](#) with obesity face weight bias in healthcare settings.

Unfortunately, even though obesity has serious consequences, especially for women, it is often misunderstood, leading to health insurance barriers that keep the full range of obesity care options out of reach for many women. Just [half of U.S. employers](#) currently cover, or are considering covering, the latest generation of anti-obesity medications. [Medicare](#) does not cover them. [Sixteen states](#) currently offer Medicaid coverage for these medications—and we hope Indiana will follow suit. We believe that the evidence on obesity and its impacts are clear: employers and policymakers should cover obesity care for Hoosiers just like any other chronic disease—it's only fair.

AWHP, along with leading stakeholders from across the healthcare community, recently launched the EveryBODY Covered campaign, a first-of-its-kind initiative aiming to activate women to advocate for insurance coverage of comprehensive obesity care. We encourage you to refer to the resources available on our website ([everybodycovered.org](#)) for more information about obesity's particular impact on women, and appreciate your attention to this important step towards addressing obesity and supporting women's health.

Respectfully,

Millicent Gorham, CEO, Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention