



Alliance for Women's  
Health & Prevention

April 15, 2024

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma  
State of Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Rhode Island Senate Committee on Finance,

The Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP) respectfully requests that you continue to prioritize the impact of obesity on Rhode Islanders as you review the state's FY 2025 Medicaid budget and consider other legislative proposals. As an organization focused on women's preventive health, AWHP recognizes that obesity is a chronic disease with a significant impact on women's health. We are pleased to see that Rhode Island provides Medicaid coverage for anti-obesity medications (AOMs)—an important tool for helping manage and treat obesity. We encourage the committee to maintain this coverage and consider additional opportunities to expand access for *all* evidence-based obesity care options, including AOMs, for even more Rhode Islanders, regardless of where they get their health insurance.

Obesity is a chronic, treatable disease that affects nearly [3 in 10 women](#) in Rhode Island 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. Women with obesity are also more likely to face harmful social stigma and discrimination. For instance, women with obesity are [less likely](#) to be promoted at work, and as many as [69% of women](#) with obesity face weight bias in healthcare settings. Given obesity's impact, AWHP believes that all women in Rhode Island should have broad coverage for the full scope of obesity care.

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 AOMs, and [Medicare does not cover](#) AOMs.

Luckily, Rhode Island is among the [16 states](#) that offer Medicaid coverage for these medications. This is an excellent first step in providing coverage for comprehensive obesity care—and we hope that this momentum will continue in Rhode Island and across the nation. We are advocating for an expansion of coverage for *all* evidence-based obesity care options, including AOMs, for more Rhode Islanders. Obesity care should be covered 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](http://everybodycovered.org)) for more information about obesity's particular impact on women, and appreciate your attention to addressing obesity and supporting women's health.

Respectfully,

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