



Alliance for Women's
Health & Prevention

September 28th, 2023

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers
Chairwoman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member

Dear Representative McMorris Rogers and Representative Pallone,

The Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP) is focused on ensuring accessible, affordable, and equitable preventive health care for all women. A key element of preventive health is obesity treatment, as obesity raises the risk for cardiovascular disease and is associated with other serious diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, many forms of cancer, asthma, pulmonary blood clots, arthritis, and stroke. AWHP strongly supports legislation to ensure equitable access to obesity treatments.

On July 20th, 2023, U.S. Senators Tom Carper (D-DE) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) reintroduced the "Treat and Reduce Obesity Act" (TROA) to expand access to obesity treatment options for Medicare beneficiaries (**S.2407**). Concurrently, Representatives Brad Wenstrup (R-OH), Raul Ruiz (D-CA.), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA), and Gwen Moore (D-WI) introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives (**H.R. 4818**).

We would like to thank these members for reintroducing this important bi-partisan piece of legislation that is long overdue for passage. We are grateful for Congressional support to fight obesity, a serious chronic disease affecting a growing number of Americans. This year is a significant year in the fight on obesity, as it marks the 10th anniversary of TROA's first introduction during the 113th Congressional session in 2013. It has been re-introduced in every Congress thereafter. **We would sincerely appreciate your support as a co-sponsor of H.R. 4818 help bring the much-needed legislation over the finish line in this pivotal 118th Congress.**

Obesity statistics have changed dramatically, for the worse, since the initial introduction of TROA. In 2013, the prevalence of obesity among adults in the United States was at 27.1%. Currently, approximately 42.4% of the adult population are living with obesity. A study led by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, released in 2019, projected that a staggering 50% of American adults will have obesity by 2030 and about 25% will have severe obesity.

As with nearly any disease, women experience obesity and its impacts differently than men. For example, obesity has a significant impact on fertility and pregnancy. Furthermore, if existing trends in obesity continue, [52.5% of Hispanic women and 49% of Black women](#) will develop

diabetes in their lifetime — compared with 31% of white women — revealing obesity’s critical connection to health disparities and the need to address this issues concurrently.

If enacted into law, TROA 2023 would establish Medicare Part D coverage for FDA-approved anti-obesity medications and intensive behavioral therapy to ensure access to a full continuum of care for Medicare beneficiaries who have obesity. Researchers at USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy found that covering anti-obesity medication could generate approximately \$175 billion in Medicare cost offsets in the first 10 years of coverage and \$700 billion after 30 years.¹ They also found that in the first 10 years alone, covering weight-loss therapies would save Medicare \$175 billion to \$245 billion, depending on whether private insurance joins Medicare in providing coverage, as they have historically done. Given the fact that Medicare covers life-saving medication for a range of chronic diseases, treating obesity should be no different, especially since other disease states could be avoided if obesity were addressed.

The health and economic benefits of providing coverage to those Americans who need various pharmacotherapies to lead healthier lives is well documented. It is essential that we address obesity policy in the United States now. We appreciate your support of TROA 2023 by becoming a co-sponsor. Please see attached contact information for congressional staff who are handling co-sponsorship for their respective offices.

Ensuring that patients living with obesity have access to the full continuum of care is extremely important to AWHP. As an organization focused on preventive health policy, AWHP believes it is important to address obesity using equitable and holistic tactics and measures.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me at mgorham@womenshealthandprevention.org or (202) 957-3200 with any questions or concerns. We thank you for your consideration of this particularly important matter.

Sincerely,



Millicent Gorham

CEO, Alliance for Women’s Health and Prevention

cc: Representative Kelly Armstrong, Vice Chairman
Representative Kim Schrier, Vice Ranking Member
Representative Brett Guthrie, Health Subcommittee Chairman
Representative Larry Bucshon, Health Subcommittee Vice Chairman
Representative Anna Eshoo, Health Subcommittee Ranking Member

¹ Ward, Alison Sexton et al. “Benefits of Medicare Coverage for Weight Loss Drugs” USC Schaeffer. April 2023. [2023.04 Schaeffer Center White Paper Benefits of Medicare Coverage for Weight Loss Drugs.pdf \(usc.edu\)](https://www.usc.edu/schaeffer-center/white-paper/benefits-of-medicare-coverage-for-weight-loss-drugs.pdf)