



May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Dear Chairwoman Lucas and Chairman Torian:

This past legislative session in Virginia, language was added to the state's budget bill changing the requirement to access anti-obesity medications (AOMs) under Medicaid to a BMI of over 40kg/m<sup>2</sup>. The [clinical guidelines for the management of obesity](#) recommends the initiation of pharmacotherapy for patients with a BMI  $\geq 30$  or a BMI of 27 with a co-morbidity. In no other disease state would we wait until someone was considered "severe" before allowing treatment. More importantly, medical decisions should be kept between a patient and their healthcare provider, not decided by the legislature.

As an organization focused on women's preventive health, the Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP) recognizes that obesity is a chronic disease with a significant impact on women's health, and that this amendment would create a significant barrier in access to obesity care for countless women. **As such, we strongly oppose Governor Glenn Youngkin's proposed Budget Amendment #119, which creates unnecessary criteria that is not based on science for Medicaid patients to access AOMs and further exacerbates existing health equity issues.**

Virginia Medicaid patients have had access to AOMs since January 1, 2023, allowing many patients finally able to treat their obesity. Furthermore, given that obesity relates to over 200 other chronic conditions, access to AOMs is critical in decreasing the impact of obesity on population health and in turn promoting health equity.

Limiting Medicaid patients from accessing AOMs sends a message that these patients are not worthy of tools that will help them live a healthier life. They should not have to wait until they developed Type 2 diabetes or have a cardiac event before they can access AOMs. Instead, they deserve access to comprehensive care that focuses on prevention.

Please follow clinical guidelines that explicitly state that obesity is a chronic disease for which patients should have access to the full spectrum of care. Ensuring that Medicaid patients in Virginia have access to evidence-based options for treating this disease is critical for their health and well-being.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss the impact of obesity on women's health and how we can work together to improve obesity care coverage. Please let us know if this might be possible.

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