



May 23rd, 2024

Dear Chairman Rivera and Members of the New York Senate Committee on Health:

The Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP) respectfully urges you to pass Senate Bill 8959, which would require comprehensive coverage for obesity care in state-sponsored and commercial health plans.

As an organization focused on women's preventive health, AWHP recognizes that obesity is a chronic disease with a significant impact on women. Obesity is a chronic, treatable disease that affects [more than 1 in 4 women in New York](#) and has a [disproportionate impact](#) on women of color. It is [associated with over 200 other health complications](#), 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 — including [earning as much as less than 9%](#) than females not affected by obesity.

Obesity also has a tremendous economic burden, with economic costs (both direct and indirect) totaling [\\$1.72 trillion in 2018](#). In New York specifically, obesity and overweight are estimated to have caused a [\\$37.3 billion reduction](#) to the state's economy in 2022 alone, and New York employers faced [\\$3.2 billion higher costs](#) for health-related absenteeism and disability due to obesity.

AWHP believes that insurance coverage for the full scope of obesity care options—including counseling or intensive behavioral therapy, nutrition services, behavior modification, bariatric surgeries, and obesity medications—is critical to improving the health of women across the state.

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—particularly medications. **By passing Senate Bill 8959, New York would expand access to comprehensive obesity care for countless of its residents, thereby greatly decreasing the impact of obesity on population health and in turn promoting health equity.**

Ensuring that New Yorkers have access to evidence-based options for treating this disease is critical for their health and well-being. As such, AWHP strongly supports the passage of this bill.

Respectfully,

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