

## Statement on the need for the CMS Rule on Coverage of Obesity Medications

We, the undersigned organizations, are enthusiastically supportive of the proposed rule by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to align coverage policy to reflect the prevailing medical consensus that obesity is a chronic disease. We urge the incoming administration to finalize this policy through the rulemaking process. By extending access to obesity medications for people living with obesity who lack access to comprehensive evidence-based care in Medicare and Medicaid, the proposed CMS rule would address an urgent health crisis and leading contributor to the “Unhealth” of Americans. If action is not taken, the total number of adults with overweight or obesity will reach 213 million. To achieve making America healthier, obesity must be addressed, treated and managed effectively.

Medicare Part D’s prohibition of coverage for “weight loss” medications is a major barrier for older Americans and those living with disabilities, and many dual eligible beneficiaries, to receiving medically necessary, safe, and effective FDA-approved pharmacotherapy to treat obesity. Medicare’s current categorization and restriction is outdated. It does not align with current medical evidence, standards of care or the understanding of the disease.

The CMS proposed rule would require coverage for obesity medications under Medicare and Medicaid by acknowledging obesity as a chronic condition. **We wholeheartedly agree with the rule’s proposal to reinterpret these medications for the treatment of obesity, that would provide coverage under Medicare and Medicaid.**

Obesity is a treatable chronic disease that plays a major factor in many other conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, fatty liver disease, kidney disease, lipid disorders, certain cancers, sleep apnea, arthritis, and mental illness. The treatment of obesity requires a comprehensive approach including administering intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) and bariatric surgery under Medicare Part B and providing Medicare Part D coverage for Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved obesity medications.

The obesity epidemic has had a negative impact on our nation’s health and economy. Among older adults (aged 60+), the prevalence of obesity is 42.8 percent, similar to the level among younger and middle-aged adults. More than 20 percent of the population will be 65 years of age or older by 2030, up from 15 percent today, highlighting the importance of addressing obesity among older Americans. Among Medicaid beneficiaries, the prevalence of obesity is 38 percent, while the prevalence of overweight and obesity is 70 percent among Medicaid adults.

Without treatment Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries with obesity risk further health deterioration and an increased likelihood in the onset of complications including obesity-related cancers, type 2 diabetes, and end stage renal disease. Additionally, people with

severe obesity have a 48 percent higher risk of physical injury including falls which lead to higher costs and mortality rates.

The new administration must take action to address this crisis, by allowing Medicare and Medicaid to offer comprehensive obesity care for the millions of Americans who need these services and treatments. This action would improve the health of individuals before they enter the Medicare program, thereby supporting better health and reducing long-term costs.

A Philip Randolph Institute  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Alliance for Aging Research  
Alliance for Patient Access  
Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention  
American Academy of Physician Associates  
American Association of Clinical Endocrinology  
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine  
American Diabetes Association  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Kidney Fund  
American Liver Foundation  
American Medical Women's Association  
American Psychological Association Services  
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery  
American Society for Nutrition  
Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists  
Bone Health & Osteoporosis Foundation  
California Black Health Network  
California Chronic Care Coalition  
CancerCare  
Caregiver Action Network  
Center for Patient Advocacy Leaders  
Choose Healthy Life  
Chronic Care Policy Alliance  
Color of Gastrointestinal Illnesses  
ConscienHealth  
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation  
DCM Foundation  
Defeat Malnutrition Today  
Diabetes Leadership Council  
Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition  
Endocrine Society  
Fatty Liver Foundation  
Gerontological Society of America  
Global Liver Institute  
HealthyWomen

ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Liver Coalition of San Diego  
Looms For Lupus  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
Lupus Foundation of America  
MacDonald Center for Nutrition Education and Research  
MANA, A National Latina Organization  
Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Missouri Psychological Association  
Movement is Life  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging  
National Association of Hispanic Nurses  
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Nurses Association, Inc  
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging  
National Consumers League  
National Council on Aging  
National Hispanic Council on Aging  
National Hispanic Health Foundation  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Kidney Foundation  
National Psoriasis Foundation  
Nevada Chronic Care Collaborative  
Obesity Action Coalition  
Obesity Medicine Association  
PAs in Obesity Medicine  
Raymond A. Wood Foundation  
RetireSafe  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Society of Behavioral Medicine  
STOP Obesity Alliance  
The American Society for Preventive Cardiology  
The Mended Hearts, Inc.  
The National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)  
The Obesity Society  
WomenHeart  
YMCA of the USA