

Statement of Support for the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA – S2407)

November 22, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

RE: Statement of Support for the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA – S2407)

The undersigned patients, health care providers and state and national organizations write today to raise awareness and request support for passage of some form of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA - S2407), which is being considered by the Senate. The bill aims to effectively treat and reduce obesity in older Americans by enhancing Medicare beneficiaries' access to healthcare providers that are best suited to provide intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) and by allowing Medicare Part D to cover Food & Drug Administration (FDA)-approved obesity medications. *We request that you take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that some form of TROA is included in an end of the year Senate health package and support passage of this important legislation in 2024.*

Obesity – the common risk factor for multiple chronic, costly and deadly comorbidities.

The time for action by Senate members is now! Obesity is associated with more than 200 comorbidities, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and multiple types of cancer which are leading causes of preventable death in the US. These conditions also contribute to significant health care expenditures in the Medicare program which could be reduced or avoided if obesity was appropriately treated and managed based upon existing recognized scientific evidence and standards of care.

Without obesity treatments and related supportive services, Medicare beneficiaries with overweight or obesity risk further health deterioration and an increased likelihood in the onset and progression of related comorbid conditions including obesity-related cancers, diabetes, and end stage renal disease. Additionally, people with severe obesity have a 48% higher risk of physical injury including falls which lead to higher costs and mortality rates.

Congress can positively impact the health, quality of life and productivity for Medicare beneficiaries by taking immediate steps to prioritize services and treatments for Medicare beneficiaries affected by obesity. More than 38% of U.S. adults aged 60 and older live with obesity, and nearly 6.6% live with severe obesity.

Obesity – a significant contributor to health inequities and worse outcomes.

Medicare's failure to cover obesity medications approved by the FDA is blatant discrimination. Medicare would never refuse to cover FDA approved therapies for other chronic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis. Addressing obesity must be part of our response to health equity issues.

Women are disproportionately affected by obesity, both in health outcomes and economic costs. A 2021 Journal of Midlife Health article found that "women are at higher risk for developing

obesity-related physical and psychological comorbidities and have a twofold higher mortality risk than overweight men.”

Obesity also disproportionately impacts communities of color that already face systemic inequities in life and health care. Black women live with obesity at higher rates than any demographic group—approximately 4 out of 5 live with overweight or obesity. Hispanic and Latino women also live with obesity at higher rates than white women.

TROA – the first step in reducing chronic disease burden and decreasing Medicare expenditures.

It’s time to acknowledge obesity for the progressive, chronic disease that it is and take steps to expand access to treatment, in the same way services and medications are covered by Medicare for other chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. The current Medicare policy of covering only obesity medications that also have another approved indication, such as for treating diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, discriminates against those with “only obesity” by limiting their access to valuable therapies.

Obesity is a cardio-metabolic disease that causes the body to inappropriately store fat that impairs health. Obesity interventions and treatments focus on addressing the cardiometabolic dysfunctions rather than focusing on “cosmetic weight loss.” Medicare’s existing categorization and restriction of obesity treatments is outdated. It does not align with current medical evidence, standards of care or the understanding of the disease.

The significant health, financial and social benefits of passing some form of TROA in 2024.

TROA would improve the management of obesity and reduce the prevalence of numerous associated conditions by giving Medicare patients and their healthcare providers more tools on their journey to improved health. A healthier Medicare population will utilize less resources and reduce program expenditures. Passage of TROA would also make a significant statement toward ending the pervasive discrimination and bias encountered by individuals living with obesity and overweight.

Thank you for your time and commitment to ensuring that some form of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (S2407) is included in an end of year Senate health package and passed before Congress adjourns in 2024.

We welcome the opportunity to speak with you about the importance of passing TROA in some form this year.

Sincerely,

Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation

Alliance for Women’s Health and Prevention

American College of Cardiology, Ohio Chapter

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
Headquarters in Newberry, FL

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, Colorado Chapter

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, Oregon Chapter

American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, Washington Chapter

Rebecca Andrick DO, DABOM, FOMA
Diplomate of American Board of Obesity Medicine
Director, Weigh to Wellness Denver

Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health
Marilyn A. Fraser, MD
Chief Executive Officer

Dana Beall Brown, PhD

Jennifer Bishop, CRNP
Gettysburg, PA

Abby Bleistein, MD, FAAP, ACP, DABOM

California Chronic Care Coalition

Chronic Care Policy Alliance

Chronic Disease Coalition

Susan G. Cole, D.M.D
Gettysburg, PA

Colorado Gynecologic Cancer Alliance

Colorado Medical Society

Colorado Obesity Society

Taylor Constantino
Guthrie Weight Loss Center

Stephen Cook, MD, MPH, FAAP, FTOS
Pediatrician and Advocate
Columbus, Ohio

Nevada Cox, MS
(MD Class of 2025), Student Doctor
Penn State College of Medicine

Melanie Cree MD, PhD
Children's Hospital Colorado

Dallas Obesity Society

Sasha De Jesus, MD, DABOM
Founder & Chief Medical Officer, MetaboliK

Diabetes Sisters

Krista Drislane, FNP-C
Guthrie Weight Loss Center

Kathryn E. Earls, MHS, PA-C
Clinical Assistant, Bariatric Medicine
Guthrie Clinic

Exon 20 Group

Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Florida Academy of PAs (FAPA)

Florida Obesity Society

Florida Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

Carolyn Francavilla, MD

Madeline Garcia, OMS IV (medical student)

Adam Gilden, MD, FACP, DABOM

Global Healthy Living Foundation

Harrisburg Area YMCA

Zachary Hartel, RDN

Louise Helton, MA

Gil Herbert, MD
Obesity Fellow
Anschutz Health and Wellness Center

Hispanic Federation

Lisa Hopkins, OMS IV (medical student)

Carah Horn, MBA-HCA, RN, CBN, FASMBS-IH
MBS Coordinator, Orlando Health

Robert M. Huster, MD
Retired Bariatric Medicine Specialist
Liberty, MO

ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network

International Pain Foundation

Caylee Irvin, PA-C (Bariatric Surgery PA)

Jamie Kane, MD
Director, Northwell Health Center for Weight Management
Chief Section of Obesity Medicine
Donald & Barbara Zucker School of Medicine
Hofstra/Northwell

Judith Korner, MD, PhD, DABOM
Director of the Metabolic and Weight Control Center
Columbia University Irving Medical Center
Chair, American Board of Obesity Medicine

Carina Kugelmas, MD, FAAP, DABOM

Erik Kramer, DO DABOM

Ted Kyle, RPh, MBA
Founder, ConscienHealth

Louisiana Chapter American College of Surgeons

Louisiana Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (LA-ASMBS)

Louisiana Obesity Society (LOS)

Louisiana Society of Anesthesiologists

Victoria Lu, MD, DABOM-CU
Anschutz Weight Management & Wellness Clinic
Aurora, CO

Lupus Colorado

Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.

Sean C. Lucan, MD, MPH, MS
Founder, Max Well Solutions LLC

Sriram Machineni MD
Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY
Director, Fleischer Institute Medical Weight Center at Montefiore
Chair of The Obesity Society Clinical Practice Committee

Mara Matkovic, MD, DABOM, DABLM
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Northwell Health Center for Weight Management

Angela McNair, PA-C (Obesity Med PA)

MET Crusaders

Annie Moore, MD, MBA, FACP, ABOM
Endowed Chair for Excellence in the Patient Experience
Professor of Clinical Medicine
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Janice Miller, MD

Susan E Mirkinson, MD FACP, DABOM
Center for Weight Management
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Donald & Barbara Zucker School of Medicine
Hofstra/Northwell

Missouri Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Alexander Nathanson, MD DABOM
Obesity Medicine Physician, NYC Health & Hospitals
South Brooklyn Health

National Association of Hispanic Nurses, Central Florida chapter

National Association of Hispanic Nurses, New York Chapter

New York State Academy of Family Physicians

North Carolina Obesity Society

Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition

Marsha Novick, MD, FAAFP, DABOM, FTOS
Medical Director, Weight Management & Wellness
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Wesley Nuffer, PharmD, BCPS, CDCES, BC-ADM

Obesity Action Coalition
Headquarters in Tampa, FL

Obesity Medicine Association
Headquarters in Centennial, CO

Ohio Academy of Family Physicians

Ohio Kentucky Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

Orlando Health

Carrie Oss, PA-C

PD-L1 Amplifieds

Laura Perich, RDN, LPCC, CSWOM

Collin J. Popp, PhD, MS, RD
Research Scientist, NYU Grossman School of Medicine

Jonathan Q. Purnell, MD
Director, Center for Preventive Cardiology
Oregon Health & Science University

Dr. Anne Rizzo MD, Chief of Surgery
Guthrie Medical Group

David A. Rometo MD
Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine
Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Kristie Rupp, PhD, ACSM-CEP
Associate Professor & Program Co-Coordinator

M.S. Physical Activity & Chronic Disease
Southern Connecticut State University

Saint Louis Obesity Society

Kimberley Sampson-Paine, MD, MSc,
FACOG, DipABLM, DipABOM, MSCP
Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Southwestern Vermont Medical Center

San Antonio Obesity Society

Alpana Shukla, MD, MRCP(UK), FTOS
Associate Professor of Research in Medicine
Director of Clinical Research
Comprehensive Weight Control Center
Weill Cornell Medicine

Tiffany Smith EMT-P, CA
Guthrie Clinic

Elena Sullivan, MMSc, PA-C
Weight Management Physician Associate
Dignity Weight Center

Marilyn Suri, DMSc, MPA, PA-C
South Regional Director, Florida Academy of PAs

Jaymey Sweeney, FNP

The Obesity Society
Headquarters in Rockville, MD

Krystal Tamura, MD, DABOM

Beverly Tchang, MD
President, Tri-state Obesity Society
Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine
Weill Cornell Medicine

Tammy L. Templeton, one living with obesity

Texas Academy of Family Physicians

Texas Association for Bariatric Surgery

Texas Grange

Texas Renal Coalition

Kyle Thompson, MD, FACS, DABOM

Paunel Vukasinov, MD
Board Certified Internal Medicine
Board Certified Obesity Medicine
Medical Offices in Manhattan

Samantha Wagner, RDN

St. Anthony North Family Medicine
Westminster, CO

Weight to Wellness Denver

Washington Obesity Society

Amy Wells, MSN, RN
Jacksonville, FL

Wenatchee Valley YMCA

Lori Wenz, NP-C, BC-ADM, FOMA
Western Colorado Weight Care, LLC.
Grand Junction, CO

Donna West, LPN
Guthrie Clinic

YMCA of Greater Seattle

YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties

YMCA of Southwest Washington

Zeta Chi Chapter, Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc.

Florencia Ziemke MD, DABOM
Evexia Medical, Florida

Fahad Zubair, MD
Medical Director, Obesity and Nutrition Medicine
Bariatric and Metabolic Institute
Allegheny Health Network