



The Honorable Governor DeWine  
Vern Riffe Center, 30th Floor  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Attn: Giles Allen, Director of Legislative Affairs

Dear Governor DeWine,

As the CEO of the Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention (AWHP), I am writing to urge you to **remove the prohibition on Medicaid coverage for obesity medications** in [§5160-9-03](#) of the Ohio Administrative Code. This outdated policy is limiting access to evidence-based obesity care for some of the state's most vulnerable communities.

Obesity is a serious chronic disease with a significant impact on women across Ohio. As you consider policies related to obesity care coverage, I encourage you to keep the following in mind:

- Nearly **40% of women in Ohio are affected by obesity**, disproportionately impacting women of color.<sup>i,ii</sup>
- **Over half (54%) of Ohio Medicaid enrollees are women.**<sup>iii</sup>
- Obesity is associated with **over 200 health complications** including **many that specifically affect women**, such as breast and ovarian cancers and fertility challenges.<sup>iv,v,vi</sup>
- Across the country, women with obesity are **more likely to face harmful social stigma and discrimination**—including **earning up to 9% less** than women not living with obesity.<sup>vii,viii</sup>

**Improved access to comprehensive obesity care**, which includes medications, **is key to addressing the burden of obesity across the U.S.**, and especially in Ohio. Clinical guidelines are clear that people living with obesity need access to the full continuum of care, which includes counseling or intensive behavioral therapy, behavior modification and physical activity, FDA-approved medications, weight loss surgeries, and nutrition or dietician services. Yet today, Ohio Medicaid covers metabolic and bariatric surgery while denying access to FDA-approved obesity medications. **This creates a clear gap in care.**

**Removing the prohibition in §5160-9-03 is a critical first step** that your Administration can take without legislative action. By removing this prohibition, the Ohio Department of Medicaid can evaluate coverage for these medications and pursue negotiations with manufacturers.

When obesity is left untreated, it leads to higher rates of chronic disease, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, placing a greater strain on patients and the Medicaid program. In Ohio, obesity is estimated to drive approximately \$940 million annually in additional health and assistance program costs, including nearly \$495

million in Medicaid spending.<sup>ix</sup> **Simply put, Ohio is going to pay, either by paying to treat the chronic disease of obesity now, or by paying for the consequences later.**

Patients deserve better. **AWHP respectfully urges you to remove this outdated prohibition** and ensure Ohio Medicaid beneficiaries have coverage for comprehensive obesity care.

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

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<sup>i</sup> KFF. Adults Who Are Obese by Sex. (2024). [https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/state-indicator/adult-obesity-](https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/state-indicator/adult-obesity-bysex/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D)

[bysex/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D](https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/state-indicator/adult-obesity-bysex/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D)  
<sup>ii</sup> National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Overweight & Obesity Statistics. (2021). <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/overweight-obesity>

<sup>iii</sup> KFF. Medicaid Enrollees by Sex. (2023). <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/medicaid-enrollees-by-sex/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D#>

<sup>iv</sup> American Medical Association (AMA). Obesity. <https://www.ama-assn.org/topics/obesity>

<sup>v</sup> National Cancer Institute. Obesity and Cancer. (2025). <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/obesity/obesity-fact-sheet>

<sup>vi</sup> National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Obesity and Women's Health. (2022). <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/overweight-and-obesity/women>

<sup>vii</sup> Obesity Action Coalition. Weight Bias: Does It Affect Men and Women Differently? <https://www.obesityaction.org/resources/weight-bias-does-it-affect-men-and-women-differently/>

<sup>viii</sup> GlobalData. Obesity Economic and Labor Force Impact per Million U.S. Population. (2023). <https://www.globaldata.com/health-economics/US/perMillion/Obesity-Impact-Per-Million-Population.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> GlobalData. Obesity's Impact on Ohio's Economy and Workforce in 2023. (2023). <https://www.globaldata.com/health-economics/US/Ohio/Obesity-Impact-on-Ohio-Factsheet.pdf>