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May 2, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

We, the undersigned organizations representing communities of color, civil rights groups, and health care advocacy organizations across the United States, are writing to urge you to take action to address the high prevalence and disproportionate impact of obesity in our communities. We believe that one important step towards reducing health disparities and improving public health outcomes is to ensure that all states cover obesity care including anti-obesity medications (AOMs) in their Medicaid programs. This belief is aligned with the fundamental right to comprehensive obesity care outlined in the recently released [Obesity Bill of Rights](#) available at [Right2ObesityCare.org](#).

As you are likely aware, obesity is a serious public health problem in the United States, and particularly in communities of color. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), non-Hispanic Black adults have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (49.6%) compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Similarly, Hispanic adults have an obesity prevalence of 44.8%, which is higher than that of non-Hispanic white adults (42.2) and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have an obesity prevalence of 41.3%. Additionally, while 17.4% of non-Hispanic Asians are living with obesity, research shows that Asians are at increased risk of developing obesity related conditions (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, liver disease and hypertension). Historical CDC data show, 10.8% of Asian adults and 24.8% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander adults in the U.S. had obesity.

Obesity is a major risk factor for a wide range of other health problems, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer. These conditions are also more prevalent in communities of color, leading to significant health disparities. By covering obesity care including AOMs in Medicaid programs, states can help to reduce obesity and its associated health risks, while also reducing the cost of care for these conditions.

There are efforts at every level to ensure all patients are granted access to obesity care. The American Medical Association (AMA) recently released a [policy statement](#) urging insurance coverage parity for emerging obesity treatment options, recognizing the need for comprehensive care to address this issue. The AMA's call for insurance coverage parity highlights the urgent need or action in this dire area of care.

The National Hispanic Council of State Legislators has also [passed a resolution](#) calling on Medicaid programs to cover anti-obesity medications (AOMs) to reduce health disparities and improve public health outcomes. These are a few of the many calls for swift action to ensure that all states cover obesity care in their Medicaid programs. Doing so will help to reduce health disparities, improve public health outcomes, and reduce the cost of care for obesity and its related conditions.

We believe that legislators have an important role to play in addressing obesity and its related health disparities. While Medicaid populations are deeply impacted by social determinants of health, as policy makers you have the power of legislative processes to remove the political determinants of health to enable all individuals to achieve and maintain their most healthy life. One way to do this is



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to ensure that all individuals have access to the tools and resources they need to maintain a healthy weight, including AOMs.

We urge you to support policies that ensure access to comprehensive obesity care, including AOMs, as a fundamental right for all individuals.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to working with you to address this critical public health challenge.

Sincerely,

A. Phillip Randolph Institute (APRI)

American Society for Preventive Cardiology (ASPC)

African American Wellness Project (AAWP)

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Centers (AAPCHO)

Council on Black Health (CBH)

Choose Healthy Life (CHL)

Empire Baptist Convention

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mended Heart

National Action Network (NAN)

National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN)

National Black Leadership Commission on Health (NBLCH)

National Black Nurses Association (NBNA)

National Council for Negro Women (NCNW)

National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)

National Hispanic Health Foundation (NHHF)

National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)

National Medical Association (NMA)

National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF)

National Urban League (NUL)

Obesity Action Coalition (OAC)

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA)

Partnership to Advance Cardiovascular Health (PACH)

WomenHeart