

Letter 1

From: Northup, C Joe
To: [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)
Subject: ASMBS Support Letter for Bariatric Surgical Coverage for State Employees
Date: Wednesday, March 21, 2018 10:37:03 AM
Attachments: [Wisconsin Support Letter Final.docx](#)

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for accepting this email. On behalf of the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), I am sending this letter in support of the efforts to improve access for bariatric surgery. Please let me know if I or our society, can offer any further support or assistance. Please feel free to reach out to me personally if I can answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

C. Joe Northup, MD, FACS, FASMBS

Medical Director

Premier Weight Loss Solutions

Premier Health

ASMBS Access to Care Committee, Co-Chair



ASMBS

American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery

March 26, 2018

Group Insurance Board
c/o Board Liaison
Department of Employee Trust Funds
PO Box 7931
Madison, WI 53707-7931

To Whom It May Concern:

The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery wants to express its appreciation for the opportunity to promote and fully endorse weight management coverage for Wisconsin state employees. We live in an era of great change in health care which is further challenged by inconsistency in health care coverage for state employees.

We are writing this letter in full support of the 407,000 state employees and family members for their undeniable right to receive life-saving obesity management and bariatric surgery coverage.

As you know, clinically severe obesity and its related comorbid disease represent the greatest threat to the modern health care delivery system. A recent economic study revealed that obesity-related disease treatment will exceed \$315 billion per year. The cost of obesity-related absenteeism is \$4.3 billion per year. On average, providing healthcare for patients with persisting obesity burdens the system with an additional 42% in expenditure. These figures have been relentlessly increasing over the past ten years as the obesity epidemic continues to affect our nation's health and economy.

Wisconsin has not been immune to this crisis. In fact, obesity affects 30% of its citizens, and 8.4% of Wisconsinites suffer from type 2 diabetes, which is closely associated with obesity. Wisconsin ranks 19th of the 50 states in obesity prevalence.

Fortunately, there is effective therapy available for those patients that suffer from the disease of obesity. Bariatric surgery has been shown to be the most effective and durable treatment for severe obesity and related disease. The weight loss achieved after bariatric surgery has been shown to far exceed that achieved with diet and exercise programs alone. The durability of the benefits of surgical weight loss has been measured in decades and the safety of these procedures has reached quality levels that are equivalent to gall bladder surgery and even natural childbirth.

Not only is bariatric surgery a powerful tool for weight loss, the metabolic improvements are remarkable and include dramatic and sustained improvement or remission of many chronic lethal and progressive diseases including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, gastroesophageal reflux, hyperlipidemia, and sleep apnea. In a recent issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, the STAMPEDE trial demonstrates the superiority of bariatric

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surgery as compared to medical therapy alone in the control of type 2 diabetes five years after surgery. In addition, bariatric surgery has been shown to reduce the risk of dying from major vascular events such as heart attacks and strokes by about 50%.

Because of its ability to combat obesity related disease, the economic benefits of bariatric surgery continue to validate and impress advocates and skeptics. There is an undisputed significant return on investment for those health care entities that support bariatric surgery. Bariatric surgical patients have reduced post-operative prescription costs, decreased medical interventions due to comorbid disease, decreased disability, and increased productivity. Due to these factors, state employee healthcare plans in 43 states and the federal employee health care plan currently offer coverage for bariatric surgery.

The Department of Employee Trust Funds has an opportunity to arm its patients with the best weapon against obesity and its related diseases: bariatric surgery. Both the University of Wisconsin Health Surgical Weight Management program and the Gundersen Health System bariatric program have been leaders in the arena of bariatric surgery in Wisconsin. In Madison, surgeons like Drs. Michael Garren and Luke M. Funk have been fighting the epidemic and heavily active in scientific research. In La Crosse, Dr. Shanu Kothari and his team have been recognized leading authorities and have published some of the most important studies in the field.

Numerous publications have demonstrated the cost-effectiveness and, more importantly, the dramatic health improvements of bariatric surgery. On behalf of the thousands of your deserving employees and their families, we strongly urge you to consider the direct impact your decision will have on their wellbeing and livelihood.

If you have any questions regarding the statements made in this letter, or if you would like more elaboration, we will be more than happy to discuss this issue at your convenience.

Samer G. Mattar, MD FACS FASMBS
President,
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

C. Joe Northup, MD FACS FASMBS
Co-Chairman, ASMBS Access to Care Committee