

From: [Jeremy Levin](#)
To: [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)
Subject: Wisconsin Employee Trust Funds - Access to Anti-Obesity Medications
Date: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 3:27:10 PM
Attachments: [RWHC Supports GIB-ETF AOM Coverage--5.2.23.pdf](#)

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Please find comments from the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative supporting the proposed benefit change to add AOMs to the commercial pharmacy formulary in WI.

Thank you,

Jeremy

Jeremy Levin, MHA
Director of Advocacy



880 Independence Lane | Sauk City, WI 53583
CELL 608 577 9335
OFFICE 608 644 3257



May 2, 2023

Group Insurance Board
c/o Board Liaison
Department of Employee Trust Funds
PO Box 7931 Madison, WI 53707-7931
Submitted electronically: ETFSMBoardFeedback@etf.wi.gov

Dear Chairperson Day and Vice Chairperson Cissne Carabell:

The Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) is pleased to offer support for the Group Insurance Board (GIB) to approve coverage for anti-obesity medications (AOMs) in plan year 2024 for state employees. Established in 1979, RWHC is owned and operated by forty-four rural acute, general medical-surgical hospitals. Our vision that rural Wisconsin communities become the healthiest in America has led us to a twin mission of advocacy and shared services.

RWHC members are finding and seeing value in the use of AOM to address obesity in their patients. The complex and chronic nature of obesity can affect rural residents disproportionately as rural residents tend to be older, sicker and poorer than the general populace. Additionally, the distance traveled for healthcare services is greater than their urban counterparts, and in terms of surgical services for obesity the access is very low. The opportunity to manage obesity through the use of AOMs would provide greater access for rural residents covered by the Employee Trust Fund.

Currently, 25 states have taken steps to expand access to care by providing coverage for AOMs for their state employees, including our neighbors Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan. National data shows that utilization of AOMs is below 1% for patients with obesity. Further, Wisconsin Medicaid appropriately provides coverage for AOMs. Wisconsin Medicaid has provided AOM access to patients through a prior authorization process for more than 4 years, prescribing of AOM therapy also remains below the national average (<1%). Low utilization of AOMs and the cost of treatment associated with covering the AOM class is manageable.

Studies have shown that as weight decreases, so does the prevalence of diabetes, chronic heart disease, high-blood pressure and high-cholesterol; all chronic diseases that have disproportionately higher occurrence in rural areas. Obesity should be treated like other chronic diseases.

Thank you for your consideration. RWHC is proud to be part of Wisconsin healthcare which has long promoted and embodied lower-cost and high-quality health care. We appreciate your attention to the needs of rural residents, and we look forward to working together to improve access and coverage in addressing obesity for rural Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Levin
Director of Advocacy
Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative