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**To:** [Walk, Renee - ETF](#); [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#); [Mallow, Eileen K - ETF](#); [Sieg, Tricia - ETF](#)  
**Cc:** [Teresa Fraker](#); [Tony Comuzzie](#); [Nancy Glick](#); [Leslie Golden](#); [Cassie Vanderwall](#); [LUKE M FUNK](#)  
**Subject:** Obesity Community Comments to WI ETF GIB Supporting obesity care coverage  
**Date:** Monday, May 15, 2023 11:35:10 AM  
**Attachments:** [051523 ASMBS WAND TOS OMA NCL letter to WI ETF GIB.pdf](#)

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Dear Members of the Group Insurance Board,

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (WAND, Obesity Medicine Association (OMA), The Obesity Society (TOS) and the National Consumers League (NCL), please see the attached joint comment letter -- urging the Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB) to adopt state employee health plan coverage for pharmacotherapy and medical nutrition therapy (aka nutrition counseling) for the treatment of overweight or obesity.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me via email at [chris@potomaccurrents.com](mailto:chris@potomaccurrents.com). Thank you.

Chris

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May 15, 2023

ATTN: Members of the Group Insurance Board

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (WAND), Obesity Medicine Association (OMA), The Obesity Society (TOS) and the National Consumers League (NCL), we urge the Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB) to adopt state employee health plan coverage for pharmacotherapy and medical nutrition therapy (aka nutrition counseling) for the treatment of overweight or obesity.

While our organizations truly appreciate the positive step that the GIB took to expand coverage of bariatric surgery and required precursor weight management and nutrition services for members with BMI of 35 or greater in 2020, we believe it is critical that state employees have access to all evidence-based treatment tools for obesity. In line with this belief, our groups are pleased to endorse the April 27, 2023, comments of the Obesity Action Coalition and American Diabetes Association to the Group Insurance Board regarding coverage of obesity treatment services.

We continue to be frustrated by ETF staff recommendations that discourage the Board from providing coverage for Food & Drug Administration (FDA) approved anti-obesity medications (AOMs), robust intensive behavioral therapy or medical nutrition therapy services for obesity. Failure to provide coverage for these critical services flies in the face of the large body of evidence demonstrating how treating obesity improves health outcomes and quality of life for people living with obesity.

As you know, obesity is a serious chronic disease that requires treatment and management just like diabetes, cancer, or high blood pressure. Obesity is not a matter of personal choice or moral deficiency. Obesity is often the root cause and driver of other health complications. A recent report found that treating obesity can reduce diabetes (-8.9%), hypertension (-2.3%), heart disease (-2.6%), cancer (-1.3%), and disability (-4.7%) over 10 years in private insurance coverage and Medicare.

In previous communications with the Board, the obesity community has highlighted how since 2013, when the American Medical Association adopted formal policy declaring obesity as a complex and chronic disease and supporting patient access to the full continuum of evidence-based obesity care, numerous federal and state policy organizations have echoed the AMA's position. For example, the National Council of Insurance Legislators, National Lieutenant Governors Association, National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have all recognized obesity as a chronic disease and echoed support for addressing this epidemic.

We urge the Board to be forward thinking – in the same fashion you were when you approved bariatric surgery coverage in 2020. As a nation, we must move forward toward ensuring parity in treatment coverage for this complex and chronic disease – in the same fashion as we do for every other chronic disease state.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Obesity Care Continuum Policy Consultant Chris Gallagher at [chris@potomaccurrents.com](mailto:chris@potomaccurrents.com). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin State Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery  
Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Obesity Medicine Association  
The Obesity Society  
National Consumers League