

From: [REDACTED]
To: [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)
Subject: Supporting Coverage for Weight-Loss Medication in GHIP
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 8:00:48 AM

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Dear Members of the Group Insurance Board,

I write to you today as a state employee (UW School of Medicine and Public Health) and clinician specializing in pulmonary medicine and the care of patients with cystic fibrosis, sleep disorders, and end-stage lung disease requiring lung transplantation.

I am writing to advocate for coverage for weight-loss medications through GHIP. The obesity pandemic in the United States affects many of my patients and leads to significant morbidity and in many situations is life-threatening. As a pulmonologist, I regularly encounter patients who suffer from the severe consequences of obesity, such as obstructive sleep apnea and hypoventilation syndromes. These conditions not only diminish the quality of life for individuals but also result in substantial and burdensome financial costs to the health delivery system.

As has been well researched, access to weight-loss medications has important key benefits.

1. **Lifesaving Potential:** Obesity is a leading risk factor for a myriad of health issues, particularly those related to pulmonary and cardiovascular health. By including weight-loss medications in GHIP, we can potentially save lives and reduce the incidence of obesity-related complications.
2. **Cost Savings:** Covering weight-loss medications may entail some initial costs, but it's a smart long-term investment. The expense of managing obesity-related illnesses, including hospitalizations and ongoing medical care outweighs the cost of preventive measures.
3. **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Obesity affects every aspect of a person's life, including physical mobility, self-esteem, and emotional well-being. Providing access to weight-loss medications can empower GHIP members to take control of their health, leading to a better quality of life.
4. **Alignment with Evidence-Based Standards:** Our neighboring midwestern states and the federal government have recognized the importance of covering weight-loss medications in their employee health plans. By following suit, Wisconsin can demonstrate its commitment to contemporary healthcare practices and the well-being of its public employees.

I strongly urge you to take action and provide coverage for weight-loss medications, a prudent financial decision and an imperative to safeguard the health and future of our

state's public employees, retirees and their family members. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of GHIP members and contribute to a healthier and more fiscally responsible future for Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Andrew T. Braun, MD, MHS

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January 17, 2024

Andrew Braun
[REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Braun:

Thank you for your most recent email to the Group Insurance Board (Board) regarding adding coverage of weight loss medications to the Group Health Insurance Program (GHIP).

The Board will consider 2025 GHIP changes at its February 21, 2024, meeting. The agenda, memos, and presentations for that meeting will be posted on the Department of Employee Trust Funds' (ETF's) "[Group Insurance Board Meeting Agendas and Materials](#)" webpage about a week prior to the meeting.

While ETF staff continues to monitor cost-effectiveness research, the current pricing of these drugs is still greater than the measurable savings. The Board must still adhere to [Wis. Stat. § 40.03\(6\)\(c\)](#) that only allows the Board to add benefits to the GHIP if the addition is mandated by law or if a savings can be demonstrated. If neither of these provisions are met, the Board must reduce benefits to allow for the addition of new benefits.

Recent market data has suggested that weight loss medications account for 1% of annual premium increases for 2024. The Board would either need to reduce \$18M in benefits to accommodate this cost increase, greater savings values would need to be shown in literature, or pharmaceutical companies would need to reduce prices to bring the costs in line with the demonstrated benefits.

Again, thank you for your email. If you have any other questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,

Tricia Sieg, Pharmacy Benefits Program Manager
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