

From: [REDACTED]
To: [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)
Subject: Weight Loss Prescriptions
Date: Sunday, December 10, 2023 2:34:24 PM

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Dear EFT Board Members,

My name is ChaNelle, and I have been employed with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, since 2022. Prior to my service with DATCP, I spent thirteen years working throughout various sectors of healthcare. Spanning across the United States and internationally. My knowledge of, and exposure to, the obesity epidemic and advocacy for better healthcare coverage, along with implementing alternative practices, comes from a place of both compassion and empathy towards those whom I've met over the years that have struggled with their ability to obtain, and maintain a healthy weight throughout the course of their lifetime. Or due to an underlying illness that has led to excessive weight gain that cannot be treated in absence of prescription medications, that state insurance does not currently cover.

As a public servant, and lifelong healthcare advocate, I strongly believe that the Board should provide comprehensive coverage that aligns with the overall goals of public health including combating the obesity epidemic in Wisconsin and across the country. According to information obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 68% of adults are affected by excess weight, 36.1% have a BMI between 25-30%, and 32.3% have a BMI greater than 30%. Both of those numbers being higher than the national average.

In addition to the physical health ailments that occur from being overweight or obese such as, fatigue, joint pain, respiratory problems, digestive issues, difficulties in fertility, or the onset of other diseases such as diabetes, high cholesterol, or heart conditions - many individuals will also begin to struggle mentally and socially. Collectively, this can lead to reduced productivity in the workplace, an increased number of sick days used to attend doctors' visits, more time off needed to recover from an illness, higher turnover rates, and among many other things - greater social isolation.

What I think many individuals fail to realize is, prescription weight loss medication may be expensive, however, doctor visits add up. Prescription co-pays add up. Medications needed to treat the side-effects of the primary presentations add up. Trips to the ER add up. Inhalers add up. Oxygen tanks, nebulizers and c-pap machines add up. Insulin adds up. Labs every three months add up. Diabetic eye exams and amputations add up. Needing a therapist and having to establish care with a psychiatrist adds up! Anxiety, depression, disability and feeling inadequate, adds up! Parents not being able to play with their children or attend school functions takes a toll on families. Having to care for a loved with who is overweight or obese takes a toll of relationships. No longer being able to accommodate work restrictions takes a toll on the employer.

Collectively, the Wisconsin healthcare system could do much better job when it comes to providing adequate medical and mental healthcare coverage and benefits for the public servants of the state. Far too many people believe that people are fat, simply because they want to be, and because they are lazy. The reality of that is just the opposite. For example, many women go undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed with ailments such as polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). PCOS can lead to obesity, infertility, and insulin resistance. Providing AFFORDABLE prescription coverage for anti-obesity medicines such as Mounjaro, Ozempic, Wegovy, would be life changing for these women, their families, and their relationships. Anti-obesity medication and programs should not be a privilege or a luxury but rather the standard. The state of Wisconsin should not take a back seat when it comes to providing proper prescription coverage to those in need, but rather be a pioneer and set the standard when it comes to caring for its employees and ensuring they have the necessary recourses available to them that will allow them and their families to be the happiest and healthiest version of themselves possible.

Thank you for your serious consideration of these concerning issues.

Respectfully signed,

ChaNelle Baines

*"If there is no struggle, there is no progress..."
-Fredrick Douglass*



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December 18, 2023

Dear Ms. Baines:

Thank you for your email to the Group Insurance Board (Board) regarding adding coverage of anti-obesity medications (AOMs) to the Group Health Insurance Program (GHIP).

While ETF 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 AOMs 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.

At their November 16, 2022, meeting, the Board received a [“Weight Management Analysis”](#) memo and [presentation](#) from Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) staff with a comprehensive review of methods to address overweight and obesity, and the available evidence related to treatments. The presentation and memo included information on approaches addressing overweight and obesity ranging from lifestyle and behavioral change services to medical services and anti-obesity drugs.

At the May 17, 2023, Board meeting, the Board discussed adding weight-loss drugs to the drug formulary for 2024 (see pages 9-10 of ETF's memo to the Board linked here: <https://etf.wi.gov/boards/groupinsurance/2022/06/30/qib4/direct>). The same statutory restrictions still exist, and no additional research has shown greater cost savings; therefore, the Board was not able to add weight-loss drug coverage for 2024.

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 ETF's [“Group Insurance Board Meeting Agendas and Materials”](#) webpage about a week prior to the meeting.

In your letter you expressed concerned that there is inadequate mental healthcare coverage for public employees. I wanted to make sure you were aware of the mental health resources that are available to state employees. That information can be found at <https://etf.wi.gov/insurance/health-pharmacy/health-benefits-education/mental-health-resources>.

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
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