



Dear Members of the California State Legislature,

As patient advocates, healthcare professionals, and concerned Californians, we write to express our deep concern over the Governor’s budget proposal to eliminate Medi-Cal coverage for FDA-approved obesity medications. We respectfully urge you find an alternative to complete elimination of coverage that preserves access to the greatest extent possible for California’s patients living with obesity.

**Obesity Is a Chronic Disease Deserving Comprehensive Treatment**

Obesity is a complex, chronic disease that affects nearly 30% of adult Californians and is a key driver of many other costly and deadly conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Despite persistent stigma, obesity is not a result of poor choices alone. Scientific research has clearly shown that biological, genetic, and social determinants play a significant role – and that for many patients, lifestyle changes are not enough.

FDA-approved medications, especially GLP-1 receptor agonists, have emerged as highly effective tools in helping individuals manage obesity, improve metabolic health, and reduce the risk of serious complications. These medications are widely recognized by the medical community as an essential part of modern obesity treatment.

### **Medi-Cal Patients Deserve Equal Access to Evidence-Based Care**

Medi-Cal provides healthcare coverage to more than 12 million Californians – nearly one-third of the state’s population – including low-income families, people with disabilities, seniors, and children. These populations are often at greater risk for obesity-related illness, and many face barriers to consistent care.

Stripping Medi-Cal coverage for obesity medications would deepen existing health disparities and create a two-tiered system where only wealthier Californians with private insurance can access these life-changing treatments. It would deny vulnerable residents the same evidence-based care that others receive, not because it doesn’t work – but because they are poor.

### **Prevention Saves Lives – and Money**

We understand the fiscal challenges facing the state, but denying access to obesity treatment is a short-sighted solution. Numerous studies show that treating obesity effectively reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, prevents liver disease, delays or prevents the onset of diabetes, and lowers healthcare spending over time.

The cost of inaction is far higher. Research firm Global Data estimates that in 2022, obesity reduced economic activity in California by over \$89.5 billion and had a \$10.5 billion detrimental impact on the state budget. The same year, Medi-Cal experienced \$2.7 billion in higher spending due to the disease, and households collectively spent \$3.5 billion more on healthcare-related expenses. It is clear that investing in obesity treatment now will lead to better health outcomes, reduced health system strain, and long-term savings for the Medi-Cal program and, most importantly, healthier Californians.

### **Your Leadership Is Needed Now**

California has a proud history of leading the nation in progressive, equity-driven health policies. Eliminating Medi-Cal coverage for obesity medications would undermine that legacy.

We urge the Legislature to:

- **Reject any budget proposal that completely eliminates Medi-Cal coverage** for FDA-approved obesity medications;
- **Insist on a comprehensive, evidence-based approach** to obesity care that includes medication, behavioral support, nutrition services, and long-term care coordination;
- **Protect California’s commitment to health equity** by ensuring Medi-Cal patients receive the same standard of care as those with private insurance.

This is not just a budget issue – it’s a public health issue. It’s about who we believe deserves access to effective treatment, and whether we as a state are willing to invest in the long-term health of our communities.

We urge you to stand with patients, with science, and with equity. Protect Medi-Cal coverage for obesity medications in this year’s state budget.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Patient Access  
Alliance for Women’s Health and Prevention  
American Diabetes Association  
American Medical Women’s Association  
California Black Health Network  
California Chronic Care Coalition  
Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition  
Global Liver Institute  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Looms for Lupus  
The Mended Hearts, Inc.  
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging  
National Consumers League  
National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention  
National Hispanic Council on Aging  
National Hispanic Health Foundation  
National Minority Quality Forum  
Neuropathy Action Foundation  
Obesity Action Coalition  
Obesity Medication Association  
The Obesity Society  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association