



February 20, 2026

Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Board
702 Capital Avenue
Frankfort, KY 40601

Via email

RE: Medicaid coverage of GLP-1 medications and 907 KAR 23:010

Dear Co-Chairs Adams and Fleming and Members of the Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Board:

My name is Gary Dougherty and I am the Senior Director of State Government Affairs for the American Diabetes Association® (ADA), the nation's leading voluntary health organization fighting to bend the curve on the diabetes epidemic. Additionally, the Obesity Association™, a division of the ADA, aims to reduce the prevalence of obesity and improve health.

The upcoming Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Board meeting on February 23 will feature a discussion regarding Medicaid coverage of GLP-1 weight loss medications. Currently, as you know, Kentucky Medicaid does not cover weight loss medications due to an administrative prohibition,¹ limiting access to potentially life-changing treatments for many residents. This restriction significantly affects individuals with obesity, creating a barrier to effective medical interventions that could help manage their condition and improve their quality of life.

With Kentucky's high obesity rate, ranking 7th in the nation with 37% of the adult population in Kentucky living with obesity (a figure that is projected to increase to 54% by 2030),² lifting the prohibition on Medicaid coverage for obesity medications could lead to better health outcomes statewide and support a stronger, more productive workforce.

It is on their behalf I am writing in support of proposed Rule 907 KAR 23:010³ to remove this prohibition against Medicaid coverage of weight loss medications.

According to the Regulatory Impact Analysis prepared by the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), as many as 350,000 Medicaid members have an obesity related diagnosis. The Cabinet also accurately asserts that weight loss drugs will reduce costs for treatment of conditions such as diabetes which will lessen the need for other medications and treatments and that hospital admissions and reimbursements could be reduced as a result of fewer cardiac events.

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Addressing obesity requires a comprehensive, person-centered approach, as recommended by the ADA's 2026 Standards of Care.⁴ This involves tailoring interventions to the individual's needs throughout their care journey to ensure a more effective and supportive treatment experience.

Effective treatments for obesity encompass a range of strategies, from routine screenings to identify risk factors and related conditions to offering intensive behavioral therapy, access to FDA-approved medications, and bariatric surgery when necessary. These multifaceted interventions ensure that individuals receive the full spectrum of care needed to manage obesity and improve overall health outcomes.

We are already paying for obesity in Kentucky. Obesity costs our health care system in the form of higher costs related to avoidable emergency and in-patient care as well as avoidable and costly chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, kidney disorders, fatty liver disease, and type 2 diabetes.

Investing in the coverage of obesity medications for Medicaid enrollees will dramatically improve the health of those with obesity and enable them to avoid developing costly co-morbid conditions. Coupled with the November 6, 2025 White House announcement⁵ that will enable Medicare and Medicaid to cover obesity drugs for adults at a dramatically lower cost to taxpayers, the proposed action by CHFS represents a common sense, forward thinking, and cost effective way to begin to address the obesity epidemic in Kentucky.

By investing in obesity treatments and early interventions, we can save the Commonwealth years of even more expensive treatments. For these reasons, the ADA urges the adoption of proposed Rule 907 KAR 23:010 as well as the inclusion of funding in the state budget to provide coverage of highly effective obesity medications for Medicaid enrollees.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. I would be happy to respond to any questions that may arise. Please feel free to direct any questions to me at gdougherty@diabetes.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Dougherty", written over a horizontal line.

Gary Dougherty
Senior Director, State Government Affairs

cc: DeeAnn Wenk, Committee Staff Administrator (deeann.wenk@kylegislature.gov)

¹ <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/907/023/010/>

² <https://diabetes.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/the-burden-of-obesity-kentucky-05-08-25.pdf>

³ <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/907/023/010/REG/>

⁴ https://diabetesjournals.org/care/issue/49/Supplement_1

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/11/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-announces-major-developments-in-bringing-most-favored-nation-pricing-to-american-patients/>

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