



2400 N Street, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20037

(800) 753-9222
www.abcario.org

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ABC MISSION:

To promote the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease including stroke, in Blacks and other minorities and to achieve health equity for all through the elimination of disparities.

September 18, 2023

The Honorable Brad Wenstrup
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mariannette Miller-Meeks
1034 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gwen Moore
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Reps. Wenstrup, Ruiz, Miller-Meeks and Moore:

The Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) is pleased to provide its endorsement of the *Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA)*, H.R. 4818, and is advocating for its passage by Congress this year.

Today there are a number of FDA-approved anti-obesity treatments not covered under Medicare Part D. Consequently, there is a gap in the treatment for patients who suffer from obesity and its associated medical consequences and complications. If enacted, TROA would establish much-needed Medicare Part D coverage for FDA-approved anti-obesity medications and intensive behavioral therapy to ensure access to a full continuum of care for Medicare beneficiaries who have obesity.

Obesity is a risk factor for a number of chronic diseases and conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, lipid disorders, and certain cancers. Obesity is more prevalent among Black Americans, which places this group at a disproportionately higher risk for developing cardiovascular diseases. By 2030, it is estimated that 50 percent of U.S. adults will have obesity, and severe obesity (BMI \geq 35) is likely to become the most common BMI category among women, Black Americans, and low-income adults.¹

In 2013, the American Medical Association recognized obesity as a disease state with multiple pathophysiological aspects requiring a range of interventions for treatment and prevention. This important step was necessary to improve access to medically essential care for seniors living with obesity. As America ages and the obesity epidemic worsens, Part D needs to evolve to include coverage of anti-obesity medications and behavioral counseling. Failure to provide coverage of medications to treat obesity or to manage weight loss unnecessarily perpetuates health inequities suffered by Black Americans and widens the disparity in health outcomes.

The ABC thanks you for your leadership on this important issue and offers itself as a resource to you. Should you have questions or require additional information, please contact Camille Bonta, ABC policy advisor, at 202-320-3658 or cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com.

Sincerely,

Cassandra A. McCullough, MBA
ABC Chief Executive Officer

¹ Ward ZJ, Bleich SN, Cradock AL, Barrett JL, Giles CM, Flax C, Long MW, Gortmaker SL. Projected U.S. State-Level Prevalence of Adult Obesity and Severe Obesity. *N Engl J Med.* 2019 Dec 19;381(25):2440-2450. doi: 10.1056/NEJMsa1909301. PMID: 31851800.