

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.1243/S.754
AN ACT TO ENSURE ACCESS TO THE FULL RANGE OF TREATMENT OPTIONS
FOR PEOPLE WITH OBESITY
BEFORE THE JOIT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE FINANCING
JUNE 6, 2023**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in support of H.1243/S.754, *An Act to ensure access to the full range of treatment options for people with obesity.*

The Massachusetts Medical Society is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, to give them a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible. In striving for health equity and optimal medical care, the Medical Society passionately endorses legislation that improves affordability and accessibility of health care in the Commonwealth. For that reason, the Medical Society wishes to be recorded in support of the above referenced legislation that would direct the division of medical assistance to require comprehensive coverage for the treatment of obesity.

Overweight and obesity are serious health concerns for adults, adolescents, and children that can adversely impact health. Moreover, weight stigma in the health care setting leads to disparities in care and poorer health outcomes in patients with obesity. Obesity-related conditions include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, breathing problems such as asthma and sleep apnea, and joint problems.¹ These are among the leading causes of preventable, premature death. The prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States has increased dramatically over the last several decades, increasing from 30.5% in 2000 to 41.9% in 2020, creating a public health crisis. Obesity is a serious problem for children as well. Nearly 20% of children and adolescents ages 2 to 19, more than 14 million, have obesity.² The estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the United States was nearly \$173 billion in 2019 dollars. Medical costs for adults who had obesity were \$1,861 higher than medical costs for people with healthy weight.³ Here in

¹ CDC Obesity Facts: <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>

² CDC Childhood Obesity Facts: <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>

³ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0247307>

Massachusetts, close to 28% of adults have obesity.⁴ Those in underserved communities are disproportionately affected by obesity, underscoring the urgency to strengthen coverage for MassHealth and address these inequities.

Comprehensive, multidisciplinary pediatric and adult obesity prevention, evaluation, and treatment requires frequent and regularly scheduled visits with a member of a primary or specialty care physician-led team. H. 1243/S.754, *Act to ensure access to the full range of treatment options for people with obesity*, requires comprehensive coverage for treatment of obesity. Including coverage for prevention and wellness, nutrition counseling, intensive behavioral therapy, bariatric surgery, and FDA-approved anti-obesity medication. This legislation is an important step forward in providing access to the treatments and services needed to prevent obesity and the adverse health effects it brings.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and for your important work on this pressing topic. The Medical Society respectfully urges a favorable report on H.1243/S.754, *Act to ensure access to the full range of treatment options for people with obesity*.

⁴ CDC Adult Obesity Prevalence Maps: <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/prevalence-maps.html>