

CENTRIST DEMOCRATS OF AMERICA

May 2, 2024

Governor Jared Polis
State of Colorado
Sent Via Email to: Governorpolis@state.co.us

RE: SB24-054, Diabetes Prevention & Obesity Treatment Act

Dear Governor Polis,

Centrist Democrats of America (CDA) is a group dedicated to promoting common sense public policies that prioritize “good government.” With this in mind, we wanted to offer our support for SB24-054, the Diabetes Prevention & Obesity Treatment Act. This legislation, authored by Senator Dafna Michaelson Jenet and Representatives Kyle Brown and Javier Mabrey, would, according to the law, require private insurance companies and Medicaid to provide coverage for the treatment of the chronic disease of obesity and diabetes.

Critically, this law would ensure that overweight patients in Colorado can secure access to the diabetes and weight loss drugs, which have proven to be groundbreaking medical treatments. Now, many Coloradans cannot get access to these weight loss drugs because they are not always covered by private insurers or Medicaid. This law would fix that problem, and would mean that lower income residents could now secure access to these medications that help people lose weight. You shouldn't have to be wealthy in order to be healthy.

And, obesity is clearly an issue in Colorado. According to the Obesity Action Coalition, Colorado ranks 49th in states impacted by obesity. It is also a priority for minority communities in Colorado. For example, Data from the Colorado Health Institute found Diabetes is twice as prevalent among Hispanic seniors compared with white seniors.

It is also my understanding that the state's Division of Insurance and Department of Health Care Policy and Financing both studied and found that allowing people access to these medications would balloon the burden on taxpayers and drive up insurance prices. For some reason, neither study took into consideration the cost savings associated with these drugs. Simply put: people who weigh less and are not diabetic need less medical care. Indeed, obesity is linked to 200 other diseases according to The American Medical Association.

Also, [research](#) from the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics found if these weight loss drugs were covered nationally by Medicare, it could save taxpayers as much as **\$245 billion over a decade** by reducing demand for hospital care and skilled nursing.

Dr. Jaime Moore with Children's Hospital Colorado also believes these drugs will reduce healthcare costs, and [told CBS Colorado](#): "The heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure and dialysis, amputations, infections, these things that really represent significant cost savings especially if

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we intervene earlier. For adolescent girls who develop Polycystic Ovary Syndrome, PCOS is strongly linked to obesity and is the number one cause of infertility in the world. We would be preventing the cost of invitro fertilization."

Lastly, from a political perspective, many Americans feel that the government only pays attention to the wealthy, and ignores the problems and challenges of the low-income. Democrats must not be wholly distracted by national and foreign policy issues covered by elite media like the New York Times, and indifferent to Americans who are suffering from an epidemic of obesity. If we can help lower income Coloradoans be healthy, we should.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Hank Naughton

Hank Naughton
Centrist Democrats of America