

July 20, 2023

The Honorable Tom Carper
United States Senator
513 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
United States Senator
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

Dear Senator Carper, Senator Cassidy, Representative Wenstrup, and Representative Ruiz:

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, thank you for your leadership in addressing the need for coverage of obesity medications. We are grateful that you have introduced the bipartisan, bicameral Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA), and we are pleased to endorse this legislation, which will expand access to evidence-based obesity treatment and care.

Founded in 1916, the Endocrine Society represents approximately 18,000 physicians and scientists engaged in the management and research of endocrine disorders, including obesity. Many of our members are making significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge in obesity research, prevention, and treatment and we have prioritized these issues in our policy work. We have developed and distributed educational resources about obesity to Members of Congress including an “Obesity Playbook” which provides a “101” education on the issue of obesity and includes information about TROA. We have also hosted a series of educational congressional briefings on obesity, which are available on our [website](#).

The Endocrine Society is alarmed about the increase in the prevalence of obesity across our country. Over 42% of all U.S. adults and over 19% of children are estimated to have obesity. These numbers are even more disturbing when broken down by race and ethnicity. Approximately 50% of African Americans, 49% of American Indian and Alaska Natives, and 45% of Hispanics have obesity in the United States. Unfortunately, the obesity epidemic has resulted in increased economic costs. Obesity accounts for \$170 billion in higher medical costs each year. Obesity has also affected our nation’s military readiness and national security. Just over 1 in 3 young adults between the ages of 17 and 24 are too heavy to serve in our military. The obesity epidemic has had a damaging impact on the nation and Congress must address this before it is too late.



The management of obesity includes a range of options which include lifestyle intervention and pharmacotherapy. Currently, there are restrictions in place which prevent millions of Americans from accessing obesity treatment and care. The Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA) would remove these restrictions by ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries have access to the full range of obesity treatment options.

Specifically, TROA would remove restrictions pertaining to Intensive Behavioral Therapy (IBT), an effective lifestyle intervention for obesity that includes dietary and nutrition assessment to promote weight loss. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has limited coverage of IBT to mostly primary care providers in the primary care setting. These restrictions in the referral process have resulted in underutilization of this benefit. As of 2019, only 2.16% of the more than 7.6 million Medicare FFS beneficiaries with obesity received IBT for obesity.¹ TROA would expand Medicare coverage of IBT by allowing additional qualified healthcare providers such as endocrinologists to offer IBT services.

TROA would also ensure that Medicare beneficiaries can access Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved anti-obesity medication (AOM). Research shows that adding pharmacotherapy for weight management results in increased weight loss and overall improved health. Unfortunately, these medications are currently prohibited from being covered by Medicare. TROA would remove this prohibition which would ensure that Medicare beneficiaries are able to access these medications which are scientifically proven to be effective in treating obesity.

Thank you again for introducing this important legislation to address the obesity epidemic. The Endocrine Society stands ready to work with you to pass this important bill. We will continue to share our support of TROA and our educational resources with Members of Congress. If you have any questions, please reach out to Rob Goldsmith at rgoldsmith@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

Stephen R Hammes, M.D., Ph.D.
President
Endocrine Society

¹ Medicare Provider Utilization and Payment Data: Physician and Other Supplier PUF CY2019. Data.cms.gov. <https://data.cms.gov/provider-summary-by-type-of-service/medicare-physician-other-practitioners/medicare-physician-otherpractitioners-by-geography-and-service/data>.