

Obesity Community and Partners Applaud Introduction of Legislation to Treat and Prevent Obesity in America

June 19, 2013

(Washington, DC) In recognition of the importance of a multi-faceted approach to addressing America's obesity epidemic, Senators Tom Carper (D-DE) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), along with Representatives Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Ron Kind (D-WI) today introduced legislation to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries have access to an array of approved obesity prevention and treatment tools.

Today, one-third of American adults have obesity and the costs to U.S. taxpayers of the obesity epidemic have the potential to cripple the public health care system. As a nation, we spend over \$200 billion annually in health care costs treating Americans with obesity – a cost that is simply unsustainable. This trend continues in the Medicare beneficiary population as well as, on average, annual medical costs for a Medicare beneficiary with obesity are, on average, \$1,964 (2012 dollars) more than a normal-weight beneficiary.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 8 million Americans of Medicare age have obesity and the prevalence of obesity among older Americans is rising rapidly, more than doubling between 1987 and 2002. If current trends continue, it is estimated that more than half of the Medicare beneficiary population will have obesity by 2030.

Study after economic study has demonstrated the economic value of investing in approaches to prevent and treat obesity. From reduced health care costs to increased tax revenues from a healthier and more productive workforce, combatting obesity in America has the potential to save taxpayers billions of dollars annually. The undersigned organizations commend Senators Carper (D-DE), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Representatives Cassidy (R-LA) and Kind (D-WI) for advancing an important measure to serve this vital goal and provide millions of Americans with access to the care they may require.

Key elements of the proposal include facilitating access to a wide-array of preventive and interventional options for older Americans with obesity and providing the authority to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) to provide coverage for needed obesity therapies.

Specifically, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would:

- Provide for the dissemination of additional information regarding Medicare coverage of available obesity treatment services for beneficiaries and providers;

- Provide CMS the authority to expand and enhance Medicare beneficiary access to intensive behavioral counseling to a wide-range of qualified medical professionals; and
- Facilitate Medicare Part D coverage of approved chronic weight management drugs for individuals who are obese or overweight with one or more co-morbidities.

The undersigned organizations support this legislation and urge other Members of Congress to help advance the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act.

The following organizations have signed on to the above statement:

***American College of Gastroenterology
American Council on Exercise
Arthritis Foundation
Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund
Cancer Support Community
Community Action Partnership
Healthy Trucking Association of America
HealthyWomen
International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association
Johnson & Johnson
Mental Health America
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies
National Hispanic Medical Association
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Society for Women’s Health Research
Society of Behavioral Medicine
Tigerlily Foundation
Trust for America’s Health
University of Wisconsin Hospital & Clinics and American Family Children’s Hospital
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
YMCA of the USA***