

What They're Saying:

Expanding Access to Obesity Medicines Can Make America Healthier

Recent opinion editorials by researchers, conservative leaders, obesity care advocates, and medical doctors state that the Trump administration should allow Medicare to cover obesity medications. Expanding access would improve the health of Americans struggling with obesity while reducing other health care costs long term.

“ In an era of soaring budget deficits, it is understandable that some lawmakers are weary of additional spending. **But the status quo is also not an option.** The Joint Economic Committee [estimates](#) that people with severe obesity generate more than \$9,500 per year in additional health care costs. This figure could be as much as \$14,000 per person by 2033; government spending on obesity is projected to exceed \$4 trillion over the same time frame.

The government will foot the health care bill for older Americans in one form or another. Ensuring access to the full continuum of obesity care — including obesity medications under Medicare Part D and expansion of IBT under Part B — can yield significant long-term savings and successful long-term outcomes for individuals.”

[Extending Medicare coverage to obesity medications is imperative](#)

Anand Parekh, William Dietz, and Joseph Nadglowski, STAT News, Dec. 30, 2024

“ Meanwhile, Trump advisers Elon Musk and Mehmet Oz are **pushing for wider insurance coverage of semaglutide such as Wegovy and Ozempic, which in Oz's words do “massive good.”**

Although incoming Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr has expressed skepticism, **he needs to consider the evidence.** Recent research published in the journal Current Cardiology Reports confirmed the benefits of semaglutide to prevent cardiovascular, kidney and other metabolic conditions. In December, the US obesity rate declined for the first time in more than a decade, reflecting the success of semaglutide.

[How Trump can wage an all-out war on obesity — and boost our ailing health](#)

Betsy McCaughey, New York Post, Jan. 13, 2025

“ Whether through the proposed CMS rule change or a bill in the current [Congress](#) — the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2023, which would expand coverage to weight-loss drugs when medically necessary and not for cosmetic reasons — Washington must act soon to help patients.

There are large potential health benefits to patients and net savings for the health care system from covering anti-obesity drugs that justify revising the anachronistic rules constraining [Medicare's](#) ability to improve overall health outcomes.

[Medicare should cover anti-obesity drugs](#)

Sally C. Pipes and Wayne Winegarden, Washington Times, Jan. 3, 2025

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In [a recent interview](#) with Jim Cramer, Kennedy at least allowed, “The first line of response should be lifestyle. It should be eating well, making sure that you don’t get obese. **Those GLP drugs have a place.**”

That’s something. Kennedy isn’t naturally inclined to accept it, but for the last 100 years, prescription drugs — from penicillin to the latest cancer drug — have played a huge role in making Americans healthier, and Ozempic and similar pharmaceuticals may represent the next wave.

Yes, by all means, let’s eat more arugula. But let’s not turn our back on the role of human ingenuity in making America healthier.”

[Of Course Elon Musk Is Correct about Obesity Drugs](#)

Rich Lowry, National Review, January 2, 2025



While much attention has been paid to the cost of Medicare coverage, providing obesity medicine access would improve patient outcomes, reduce healthcare disparities, and enhance Medicare spending efficiency. Given these benefits, **executing this proposed rule would be a big win for the second Trump administration.** It would build on policies implemented during the first Trump administration that boosted access and affordability to essential medical services.”

[Coverage of Obesity Medications Can Make America Healthier \(Again\)](#)

A. Mark Fendrick & Kirsten Axelsen, RealClearHealth, December 20, 2024



Significant healthcare improvements historically, including a reduction in infectious diseases or preventable cancers, have had two elements in common: a recognition of the seriousness of the condition and access to screening and treatment in insurance plans. If the US is serious about treating obesity for the economy and health, then it needs to **move treatment back into the regular healthcare system with comprehensive coverage for FDA-approved medicines.**”

[Obesity Treatment Is Still Not Being Taken Seriously, and That Is Dangerous](#)

Kirsten Axelsen & Joey Mattingly, American Enterprise Institute, January 20, 2025



Recent analysis of GLP-1 weight-loss therapies by [Citi](#) and [Goldman Sachs](#) uncovered an interesting and underdiscussed benefit: increased worker productivity. **Widely deployed, these drugs could raise labor productivity by up to 0.5 percent. That number may not sound like much, but such an acceleration would be a dramatic boost to the economy of the United States and the health of its citizens.** In low-income and disadvantaged communities and regions, where obesity rates are often the highest and rates of work the lowest, **access to these medications might be transformational.**

[Ozempic and Your Community](#)

Brent Orrell, American Enterprise Institute, January 7, 2025

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“ I certainly think its plausible to say that GLP-1 drugs may, at this moment, be a more important innovation than generative AI. Just as GenAI is looking like a general-purpose technology that can help businesses across the economy, **GLP-1s are looking like a general-purpose wonder drug**. Their impact extends beyond weight loss. Clinical trials have shown they slow the progression of several chronic diseases, including cardiovascular, kidney, and fatty liver diseases.”

[Will the Anti-Obesity Wonder Drugs Work Wonders for the US Economy?](#)

James Pethokoukis, American Enterprise Institute, October 30, 2024

“ It is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the potential benefit of greater access to AOMs in reducing surgeries, hospital stays, and other costlier interventions in many types of taxpayer-funded health systems... Given the necessity of mitigating the enormous impact of government health expenditures on taxpayers, NTU believes that **CMS can and should help to facilitate more widespread availability to AOM's to patients**.

[NTU Comments on Medicare and Medicaid Coverage of Anti-Obesity Medications](#)

Pete Sepp & Nicholas Johns, National Taxpayers Union, January 27, 2025

“ Covering anti-obesity medicines to help improve the health and lives of people, reduce spending costs, and make the U.S. a healthier and more productive nation is a smart and sensible action. **SBE Council strongly supports coverage of these anti-obesity drugs.**”

[Comments to CMS in Support of Expanding Medicare and Medicaid Patients' Access to Anti-Obesity Drugs](#)

SBE Council, Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, January 20, 2025

“ **Solutions require a mix of policies which include reshaping our obesogenic environment, consumer education, and health care interventions (behavioral interventions and pharmacotherapy).** Given that better nutrition, as opposed to hunger, is now the nation's most urgent food policy concern, we need a new bipartisan coalition which can make addressing this a priority. While past administrations have addressed obesity, it has been more of a secondary issue; **it's now urgent to tackle it as the top issue.**

[Make Higher Life Expectancy the Nation's Health Priority](#)

Anand Parekh, Bipartisan Policy Institute, January 17, 2025

“Chronic diet-related diseases cost nearly half a trillion dollars to treat. The Joint Economic Committee estimates government spending on obesity will exceed \$4 trillion by 2033. We must reduce these costs, and done right, **expanding access to obesity medications can help** make a real dent and **improve life for millions of Americans.**”

[Medicare Should Cover Wegovy — but Not Negotiate Its Price](#)

Joseph Grogran, University of Southern California, January 17, 2025

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[Obesity Treatment Is Still Not Being Taken Seriously, and That Is Dangerous](#)

Kirsten Axelsen, American Enterprise Institute, January 20, 2025



“**Medicare and Medicaid coverage for AOMs is a necessary and cost-saving approach to an epidemic of our own making.** AOMs aren’t a silver bullet but, when matched with the adoption of a healthier lifestyle and diet, are a critically needed tool to address a serious problem impacting families, seniors, workers and employers. And, in doing so, **AOMs will seriously assist combatting out-of-control and wasteful government healthcare spending down the road.**”

[How to Put American On Both a Fiscal and Physical Diet](#)

Steve Forbes, Forbes, March 11, 2025