

Submitted online: Feb. 15, 2024

Senator Ben Hansen, Chair, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB907 (Riepe) – Require Medicaid Coverage for Treatment of Obesity

SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hansen and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska strongly supports the delivery of equitable comprehensive health care. In its 2022-2024 Impact on Issues statement, the League asserts that “every US resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, [and] primary care...a health program should protect the health of its most vulnerable populations, urban and rural, in order to protect the health of everyone” (p. 137).

In 2022, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System reported 35.3% of Nebraskans were classified as obese, up from 30% in 2016. Medically, obesity is connected to multiple chronic conditions including, but not limited to, type 2 diabetes mellitus, obstructive sleep apnea, chronic pain and increased risk of multiple cancers. Fiscally, obesity is associated with high medical costs that continue to rise individually and as a population.

In addition to ethnic minorities and people with lower incomes, people covered by Medicaid are disproportionately affected as compared to those covered by commercial insurance. Unfortunately, Medicaid coverage is limited to primarily brief, ineffective lifestyle interventions and, in the most extreme cases, bariatric surgery. This gap in coverage is leading to a growing number of people covered by Medicaid with untreated obesity who are developing costly co-morbid conditions.

We can aggressively address obesity with the addition of a growing number of FDA-approved weight-management devices and medications for long-term weight management along with bariatric surgery and intensive lifestyle interventions. Requiring expanded Medicaid coverage of obesity treatment would improve equitable access to the most effective and evidence-based obesity interventions resulting not only in improved health and quality of life but also in decreased health care costs.

This bill would help address the current statewide crisis of obesity that disproportionately affects the underserved and is further exacerbated by inequitable access to treatment secondary to cost. As such, the League of Women Voters in Nebraska strongly supports the advancement of LB907.

Sincerely,

Dr. Amber Brown Keebler, Director of Health Policy, LWVNE
Rachel Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWVNE
MaryLee Moulton and Janelle Stevenson, Co-Presidents, LWVNE

Impact on Issues: 2022-2024. (2023, April 5). League of Women Voters of the United States.

<https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>