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## Sen. Cindy Rosenwald: Cover anti-obesity medications under Medicare

Apr 11, 2023



Sen. Cindy Rosenwald

FOR NEARLY a quarter of a century, we have been living with an epidemic of obesity. But since the CDC declared obesity an epidemic in 1999, efforts to address it have been ineffective. As we move out of the COVID-19 pandemic and into our new normal, it is imperative that we tackle this crisis head-on.

Almost a third of adults in New Hampshire are living with obesity. It affects every aspect of life, from mobility issues to serious chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Due to the stigma around obesity, however, those suffering are often led to believe they have a personal failing. But with 300,000 deaths annually in the U.S. from obesity-related causes, we cannot afford to treat this as anything less than a public health crisis that requires immediate intervention.



With obesity-related diseases the second highest cause of death in the country annually, it should be no surprise that a high number of older Americans are suffering the effects. With 325,000 Granite Staters enrolled, it is vital that Medicare cover all aspects of health, including disease prevention. For these reasons, I am calling on Washington to authorize FDA-approved anti-obesity medications (AOMs) to be covered under Medicare part D.

I have long been focused on bipartisan cooperation to improve the care of our elders through Medicare. We have an opportunity at this moment to improve the quality of life for Medicare enrollees by increasing access to treatment while reducing the cost to taxpayers. Obesity-related medical costs are nearly 40% of all payments by public health insurance programs. Between Medicare and Medicaid, obesity-related expenditures are estimated to be \$91.6 billion per year. By reducing the rates of obesity among Medicare recipients, we can bring down the costs of these programs.

I am grateful for the leadership our delegation has brought to this issue. Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Representative Ann Kuster, and Representative Pappas have acted as co-sponsors on legislation, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act, aimed at AOMs under Part D. However, we need more immediate action to implement the necessary changes to Medicare coverage. Through regulatory changes at CMS, AOMs can be included as a part of the standard benefit package through Part D, which is a vital step toward providing people with the treatment they need.

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Anti-obesity medications provide an opportunity for Americans to combat obesity while bringing down the costs associated with obesity-related diseases. I am confident our congressional leaders will work with the administration to implement these policy updates that will improve health outcomes for millions of Americans and tens of thousands of Granite Staters.

Sen. Cindy Rosenwald (D) lives in Nashua.