

Senate Health & Human Services

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HB24-1086 Operation of Denver Health & Hospital Authority

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Hannah Hollon For themselves	<p>My name is Hannah Hollon, and I am a constituent of District 5, and I am in support of SB24-054. I am a physician and currently a pediatric cardiology fellow at the Children's Hospital in Denver. Last year, I pursued extra training in pediatric obesity medicine in Virginia. There, I cared for pediatric patients with obesity and associated medical conditions such as hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes.</p> <p>Unfortunately, obesity is a fast-growing medical problem in children. The American Academy of Pediatrics released guidelines last year recommending that the treatment of obesity include 26 contact hours annually that includes nutrition and behavioral counseling. This is a cornerstone of obesity care in order to prevent downstream medical comorbidities. Insurance coverage of these preventive services is paramount and the biggest barrier to providing these services currently. SB24-054 would help support these efforts.</p> <p>In Virginia, I also had the opportunity to see anti-obesity medication coverage change significantly from 2022 to 2023. In January of 2023, Medicaid began offering coverage for GLP-1 medications for the treatment of obesity in children. With that change, I was able to prescribe these medications frequently and with adequate insurance coverage for patients. These medications helped some of my patients who had previously been on bariatric surgery tracks lose enough weight to delay and potentially forgo surgery altogether. I had patients on these medications who were able to reverse diabetes, fatty liver disease, and high cholesterol with weight loss. I also had patients lose weight on these medications who gained self-esteem to start going back to school. These medications are not a quick fix for obesity, as is often portrayed in the media. They are part of a comprehensive medical treatment for a chronic condition, such as with hypertension or diabetes. They are one of the best tools we have to treat severe obesity, but unfortunately, they are completely unaffordable without insurance coverage. Having lived in a state where this was affordable and possible, this kind of treatment has the potential to change lives and help children grow into healthy adults in Colorado. I strongly urge you to support this bill that would protect medical treatment of obesity and support an often stigmatized population.</p>