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April 20, 2026

The Honorable Ron Mariano
Speaker of the House
State House Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz
Chair, House Ways and Means
State House Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Re: MassBio Support for Amendment #1693 - Maintaining Patient Access to Care

Dear Speaker Mariano and Chairman Michlewitz:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MassBio), I write to respectfully express our support for Amendment 1693 to H5500, which would maintain coverage of FDA-approved obesity therapies provided through the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) and MassHealth.

We fully recognize and share the state's dedication to controlling rising healthcare costs. However, coverage decisions that override the judgment of physicians and limit patient access to FDA-approved treatments risk undermining patient care and drive even higher long-term spending. Limiting access to effective therapies can result in delayed treatment, disease progression, increased emergency department visits and hospitalizations, and ultimately, greater costs to the overall system. This approach could also disproportionately affect lower-income and historically underserved populations, those least likely to afford out-of-pocket alternatives, raising serious equity concerns. While some individuals may be able to shoulder the costs of uncovered medications, others will face difficult choices between treatment and affordability.

Clinical decisions should remain in the hands of providers and their patients. These medications are prescribed based on medical necessity and allowing a blanket coverage exclusion risks weakening the provider-patient relationship and introducing a new layer of administrative decision-making that is disconnected from individual patient needs. While we recognize the growing fiscal pressures of balancing the state budget, the prices of these therapies continue to decrease, and restricting coverage now will lead to significant disruptions in treatment for patients who depend on these therapies. We urge you to consider the long-term health and financial consequences of restricting access to widely prescribed, evidence-based therapies, and respectfully request that you support Amendment #1693.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. Should you like any further information, please contact me directly at (617) 674-5100 or kendalle.oconnell@massbio.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kendalle O'Connell".

Kendalle Burlin O'Connell
President & CEO
Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MassBio)