

Obesity: America's Calamity

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) serves as a national nursing body to influence legislation and policy that proudly supports comprehensive efforts to reduce obesity and associated mortality. The prevalence of obesity in the United States continues to rise and loss of life expectancy is worse in black communities. NBNA calls on the 118th Congress to prioritize and address obesity as America's health calamity. Obesity is associated with many chronic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disease and cancers) and disproportionately affects historically marginalized populations compared to majority populations.

Background

- Obesity is among the leading causes of death in the United States.
- An estimated **300,000** deaths per year are due to the obesity epidemic and the estimated medical cost for obesity neared **\$173** billion in one year.
- Obesity has tripled globally since 1975. An estimated **38.2** million children under 5 years old were overweight or obese in 2019.
- Obesity prevalence increased from **31% to 42%** and prevalence of severe obesity rose **5%-9%** between 1999-2020.
- Some of the leading causes of preventable death are chronic conditions such as heart disease, stroke, type II diabetes and some forms of cancer are related to obesity.
- African American women have the highest rates of obesity or being overweight compared to other groups in the United States. About 4 out of 5 African American women are overweight or obese.
- Childhood obesity is a significant and pressing issue; **1 in 5** children are affected and more likely to be obese in adulthood.

Recommendations to Legislators

NBNA calls upon the 118th Congress to:

- **Support H.R. 4818 and S. 2407** - Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2023 - to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coordination of programs to prevent and treat obesity, and for other purposes.
- **Support H.R. 5788 and S. 3171**- Reducing Obesity in Youth Act of 2023. To amend the Public Health Service Act to promote healthy eating and physical activity among children.
- **Support any legislation** that promotes the use of holistic treatment of the chronic disease of obesity.
- **Support legislation** similar to California's proposed- Obesity Treatment Parity Act which requires insurance plans to cover the continuum of care for the treatment of obesity.
- **Support legislation** that encourages insurance providers to cover the cost of new innovative weight management pharmaceutical treatments.

References

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