

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

Close

ACTION REFERRAL

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| TO <i>Giese Williams</i> | DATE <i>4-23-13</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|

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| DIRECTOR'S USE ONLY | ACTION REQUESTED |
| 1. LOG NUMBER 000334 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for the Director's signature DATE DUE _____ |
| 2. DATE SIGNED BY DIRECTOR <i>cc: Mr. Keck</i> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for appropriate signature DATE DUE <i>5-3-13</i> |
| <i>Cleared 5/2/13, letter Attached</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> FOIA DATE DUE _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Action |

| APPROVALS <small>(Only when prepared for director's signature)</small> | APPROVE | * DISAPPROVE <small>(Note reason for disapproval and return to preparer.)</small> | COMMENT |
|---|-----------------|--|---------|
| 1. <i>[Signature]</i> | <i>4-30-13</i> | | |
| 2. <i>[Signature]</i> | <i>5/2/13 a</i> | | |
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APR 23 2013

Department of Health & Human Services
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

The Bariatric Society of the Carolinas

April 17, 2013

Tony Keck

Director

State of South Carolina, Department of Health & Human Services
1801 Main Street PO Box 8206
Columbia, SC 29201 - 8206

Dear Director Keck,

My name is John D. Scott and I am Co-President of the Bariatric Society of the Carolinas, which represents surgeons, nurses, and dietitians that care for obese surgical patients across the state, from Charleston to Greenville.

On behalf of the Bariatric Society of the Carolinas, a chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), I would call your attention to the LACK of surgical coverage for evidence-based obesity treatment services, such as bariatric surgery, under the **Essential Health Benefit (EHB)** package of the state's health insurance exchange program under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Similar to many other medical conditions, obesity is a complex, multifactorial chronic disease, which requires a multidisciplinary treatment approach. This approach must encompass the best standards of care, both in terms of the treatments chosen, and the care coordination and clinical environment in which they are delivered.

Just as those affected by heart disease may first see a primary care physician and then be referred to a cardiologist and ultimately a surgeon, those affected by obesity may also follow a similar continuum of coordinated care -- involving primary care physicians, obesity medicine specialists, and ultimately bariatric surgeons. Along this coordinated care continuum, patients would also encounter other critical members of the treatment team such as registered dietitians, licensed mental health professionals, advance practice nurses, physician assistants and bariatric coordinators.

Patients with advanced coronary artery disease are "entitled" to be treated by a cardiac surgeon to address their chronic disease; Individuals affected by severe obesity must also have access to surgical intervention. South Carolina must recognize that bariatric surgery is already widely covered by Medicare, TRICARE, 47 State Medicaid plans and 44 State employee plans. In fact, South Carolina's Medicaid program provides coverage for bariatric surgery.

In addition, Mercer's 2010 National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans show that bariatric surgery is covered by 40% of plans with <500 employees AND also that the fastest growth in coverage is in small employers (<500) which is growing at 8% annually.

Should South Carolina choose to ignore a widely covered treatment avenue for this serious chronic disease, it would both disadvantage, and discriminate against, a significant portion of South Carolinians who would clearly benefit from this medically necessary intervention.

As you know, the EHB varies from state to state, and as it stands today, the lack of bariatric surgical coverage in the South Carolina EHB plan places our citizens at a distinct health disadvantage.

Please let me know if you require any additional information. I am available any time to discuss these issues or any other issues that may allow Senator Graham to better serve his constituents.

Sincerely,



John D. Scott MD FACS FASMBBS
Bariatric Society of the Carolinas
Co-President
Simpsonville, SC
864-293-4636

John A Scott
205 Samerst Forest Lane
Simpsonville SC 29681

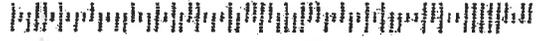
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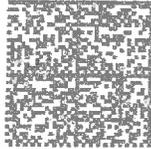
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Tony Kelly
Department of Health & Human Services
1801 Main Street
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Columbia SC 29201-8206

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May 2, 2013

John D. Scott, MD FACS FASMBBS
Co-President
Bariatric Society of the Carolinas
205 Somerset Forest Lane
Simpsonville, South Carolina 29681

Dear Dr. Scott:

Thank you for your letter regarding the lack of surgical coverage for evidence-based obesity treatment services under the Essential Health Benefit (EHB) packet for the state's health insurance exchange Affordable Care Act (ACA) program. We welcome the opportunity to be of assistance.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) agrees that services related to obesity are a critical component in addressing health disparities and improving the health outcomes of the citizens in our State. The agency is currently engaged in developing a comprehensive obesity initiative to ensure that we have appropriate policies, collaborative partners, measurable goals and objectives to address this issue. Unfortunately, we are not the most appropriate state agency to address your concerns as they relate to the EHB packet of services. Please address your concerns to:

Leslie Jones
Deputy Director Actuarial and Market Services
S. C. Department of Insurance
1201 Main Street, Suite 1000
P. O. Box 100105
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

If you should need additional information, please contact Ms. Valeria Williams, Program Director of Medical and Health Services, at (803) 898-2548.

Sincerely,

Melanie "BZ" Giese, RN
Deputy Director

MG/ajr

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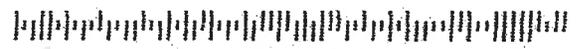
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