



PRESS STATEMENT

Contact: Peter Thomas, ITEM Coalition Co-coordinator

Peter.Thomas@PowersLaw.com

Michael Barnett, ITEM Coalition Co-coordinator

Michael.Barnett@PowersLaw.com

202-349-4243

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 2025

ITEM Coalition Statement on Decision Not to Finalize Expanded Coverage of Anti-Obesity Medications under Medicare and Medicaid

Washington, D.C., April 9, 2025 – On April 4th, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMS”) published the final rule for the Contract Year (“CY”) 2026 Medicare Advantage (“MA”) and Medicare Part D programs. Unfortunately, the agency decided *not* to move forward with finalizing the proposed coverage expansion of anti-obesity medications (“AOMs”) for the treatment of obesity of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

The **Independence Through Enhancement of Medicare and Medicaid (“ITEM”) Coalition** (<https://itemcoalition.org/>), a national consumer- and clinician-led coalition advocating for access to and coverage of assistive devices, technologies, and related services for persons with disabilities and chronic conditions of all ages, released the following statement in response to the final rule.

The ITEM Coalition is disappointed by this decision not to expand coverage of AOMs at this time to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to treat obesity. The proposed coverage expansion would have provided, for the first time, individuals with greater access to the anti-obesity care treatments they may need to improve their health and lower the chances of developing associated chronic conditions. For people with mobility disabilities, in particular, coverage of AOMs represents not just a means to address obesity but also a potential path to improved function, increased independence, return to work, and greater benefit from rehabilitation therapies and assistive devices and technologies.

In January, the ITEM Coalition submitted formal comments¹ in support of the proposed policy, with 33 ITEM Coalition members² signing on in support of the proposed rule. Many of the constituents represented by the ITEM Coalition have mobility impairments that significantly reduce their ability to ambulate, exercise, and regulate their weight in a manner taken for granted by their non-disabled peers. For these individuals, AOMs could help “level the playing field” in the fight against obesity and its related chronic conditions.

¹ <https://itemcoalition.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/item-coalition-comments-on-cy-2026-ma-and-part-d-proposed-rule.pdf>

² A full list of organizations supporting the proposed coverage expansion of AOMs is below.

“Lack of mobility in the disability population contributes to obesity and the chronic illnesses that often accompany this condition,” stated Peter W. Thomas, ITEM Coalition Co-Coordinator. “Individuals living with obesity should have equal access to the full continuum of obesity treatment options available to those living with chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular conditions.”

Nikki Grace, a board member of one ITEM Coalition member, the National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics (NAAOP), added, “As a person with an incomplete spinal cord injury and an artificial limb as a result of a car accident, managing my weight is critical to my ability to walk, work, and raise my family. These medications are an important tool for people with disabilities who often encounter significant barriers when it comes to accessible weight loss activities.”

Michael Barnett, Co-Coordinator of the ITEM Coalition, stated, “Far too often, people with disabilities cannot access fitness facilities or lack coverage of assistive devices and technologies that would enable them to participate in physical activities and routine exercise. Access to AOMs would help people with disabilities augment whatever fitness activities they are able to engage in, despite those barriers.”

The ITEM Coalition continues to advocate for this crucial policy change. We urge CMS to revisit this issue and invite stakeholders, legislators, and the public to join in building support for expanded coverage of these potential life-changing medications for people with disabilities.

For media inquiries, please contact: Michael Barnett, ITEM Coalition Co-Coordinator, at Michael.Barnett@PowersLaw.com or call 202-466-6550.

The Following ITEM Coalition Members Signed-On In Support of the Proposed AOM Coverage Expansion:

Access Ready, Inc.

ACCSES

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

American Association on Health and Disability

American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine

American Macular Degeneration Foundation

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

Amputee Coalition

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

Center for Medicare Advocacy

Center on Aging and DIS-Ability Policy

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation

Clinician Task Force

International Eye Foundation
International Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers
Lakeshore Foundation
Lighthouse Guild
Long Island Center for Independent Living
The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Perkins School for the Blind
Prevent Blindness
RESNA
Rifton Equipment
Spina Bifida Association
Team Gleason
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association
VisionServe Alliance