



Northwest Kidney Council
438 1st Street
Lake Oswego, OR 97034

Senate Committee on Health & Long-term Care
RE: Support for SB 5353

Jan. 31, 2025

Chair Cleveland, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of SB 5353 on behalf of the Northwest Kidney Council. Our organization partners with patient advocates, health care professionals, care providers, and researchers to advance kidney care in both Washington and Oregon. Together, we are committed to ensuring that all patients with kidney disease receive high-quality care and that treatment is accessible to all.

We strongly support this legislation, which requires both public and private health insurance plans to provide comprehensive coverage for obesity treatment, including intensive health behavioral and lifestyle therapy, obesity medications, and metabolic and bariatric surgery. This is a critical step toward improving public health and reducing the long-term burden of chronic diseases like kidney disease.

Obesity is a leading risk factor for the development of chronic kidney disease (CKD), diabetes, and hypertension—all of which disproportionately impact Washingtonians. Without proper treatment and intervention, these conditions can lead to kidney failure, requiring dialysis or a transplant to survive. For patients with CKD, access to effective obesity treatment is not just a matter of improving quality of life; it is often a necessary step in slowing disease progression and preserving kidney function.

Additionally, obesity treatment is essential for patients who may need a kidney transplant. Many individuals with kidney failure struggle to qualify for transplantation due to weight restrictions, making weight loss programs and obesity medications vital tools in ensuring they can access this life-saving treatment. By removing financial barriers to these therapies, this legislation would provide patients with a real chance to manage their health proactively rather than relying on costly and invasive interventions later.

We urge this committee to recognize the direct connection between obesity and kidney disease and to join us in supporting this bill. Expanding access to obesity treatment will help prevent kidney disease, improve transplant eligibility, and ultimately reduce the financial and human costs of kidney failure in Washington.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Brown
Director of Advocacy
nathaniel@nwkidneycouncil.org
971.219.5561