



National Lieutenant Governors Association

1 Resolution On The Importance Of Addressing Obesity As a Public Health Crisis

2 **WHEREAS**, obesity is a growing epidemic recognized as a disease by many leading medical
3 professional, patient organizations and government agencies including the American Medical
4 Association, American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association, American Academy of
5 Family Physicians, American Board of Obesity Medicine, Endocrine Society, the Obesity Society, the
6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National
7 Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and

8 **WHEREAS**, obesity is caused by a range of biologic, genetic, social, behavioral, and environmental
9 factors, which may increase the risks for other chronic conditions including type 2 diabetes, high blood
10 pressure, heart disease, stroke, infertility, and some cancers, and

11 **WHEREAS**, nationwide, almost 72 percent of Americans are overweight (BMI 25 - 29.9) or have
12 obesity (BMI \geq 30) and the national prevalence above 42% of the population is at a historic high, and

13 **WHEREAS**, all types of citizens are affected by obesity; however, according to the National Center for
14 Health Statistics, obesity has a disproportionate impact among lower income individuals, those with less
15 education and minority communities¹, and

16 **WHEREAS**, in addition to its human costs, obesity presents a significant economic burden to the US
17 with the total cost of chronic diseases due to obesity and overweight estimated to equal \$1.72 trillion, or
18 9.3 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product², and

19 **WHEREAS**, while prevention programs are an essential tool in mitigating the human and economic
20 costs of this public health crisis, it is imperative for state policymakers to also consider the need to make
21 comprehensive care and treatment available to individuals and families currently affected by obesity, and

22 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 2016 Behavioral Risk Factor
23 Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) data indicates that the obesity prevalence was higher for persons living in
24 rural counties (34.2 percent) as compared to those living in urban areas (28.7 percent), and

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. Data, Trend and Maps (online). (Accessed May 2, 2018). URL: <https://www.cdc.gov.nccdphp/dnpao/data-trends-maps/index.html>

² Hammond, R. A., & Levine, R. (2010). The economic impact of obesity in the United States. *Diabetes, metabolic syndrome and obesity: targets and therapy*, 3, 285–295. <https://doi.org/10.2147/DMSOTT.S7384>



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25 **WHEREAS**, the CDC indicates that persons of any age with obesity (defined by the CDC as having a
26 body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher), are “at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.”³,
27 and

28 **WHEREAS**, COVID-19 identified health inequities experienced by those who are overweight or living
29 with obesity who in turn are disproportionately affected by the virus, and

30 **WHEREAS**, a recent simulation examined COVID-19 cases through April 2021 finding a 25 percent
31 reduction in obesity in the US population (prevalence reduced from 40 percent to 30 percent) could lead
32 to 119,000 fewer hospitalizations, 44,000 fewer ICU admissions, and 65,000 fewer deaths⁴, and

33 **WHEREAS**, patients with obesity face significant social stigma and may experience health care
34 coverage barriers when seeking comprehensive obesity treatment, which includes obesity screening,
35 nutritional counseling, intensive behavioral therapy, pharmacotherapy, and surgery as determined in
36 consultation with a physician, and

37 **WHEREAS**, progress in the development of lifestyle modification therapy, FDA cleared
38 pharmacotherapy options, and bariatric surgery has led to new options with improved patient outcomes
39 to effectively manage weight and treat obesity.

40 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the National Lieutenant Governors Association
41 (NLGA) recognizes that policymakers can play a central role in addressing impediments to the treatment
42 of obesity by taking steps to eliminate obesity stigmas impeding treatment and increasing opportunities
43 for Americans to receive comprehensive care and treatment to manage this chronic disease.

44 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the NLGA encourages states to establish statewide obesity
45 councils and taskforces or to otherwise use existing structures in place to elevate a focus on obesity as a
46 significant and costly chronic disease, and to explore possible solutions for the growing epidemic,
47 including the need for additional training of current and future health care professionals, who are critical
48 to the diagnosis and treatment of obesity to address the high rates of obesity in communities of color and
49 other populations living with obesity who in turn are disproportionately affected by risks associated with
50 COVID-19.

³ Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) - People with Certain Medical Conditions, Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention (last updated Sept. 11, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>.



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51 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that NLGA encourages Congress, the Centers for Medicare and
52 Medicaid Services, and state governments to address obesity care barriers limiting patient access to day-
53 to-day obesity management.

54 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that NLGA recognizes that states can take leading roles to address the
55 obesity epidemic by providing adequate access to treatment options for state employees and in other
56 publicly funded healthcare programs to provide a model for the private sector to follow in managing the
57 human toll and financial impact of obesity on health care costs.

ADOPTED, this day, the 27th of August, 2021.

Sponsors: Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth (R – Alabama), Lt. Governor Pamela Evette (R – South Carolina), Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long (D – Delaware), Lt. Governor Howie Morales (D – New Mexico), Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser (R – Louisiana), Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver (D – New Jersey), Lt. Governor Dianne Primavera (D – Colorado)