
ASMBS Activity Report

January 2015

Prepared by Christopher Gallagher, ASMBS Washington Representative

HEADLINES:

114th Congress Convenes

OCC Comments on EHB Regs

Dr. Murthy Confirmed as Surgeon General

ASMBS Chapters Mobilize on EHB Front

114th Congress Convenes

In early January, the 114th Congress convened with Republicans holding strong majorities in both the House and Senate. ASMBS and other member groups of the Obesity Care Continuum (OCC) will be participating in a series of monthly advocacy days on Capitol Hill to foster relationships with new members of Congress as well as key GOP lawmakers in the Senate who are assuming new roles as Chairs of key healthcare committees.

OCC Submits Comments on CMS Proposed EHB Regulations

On December 22, 2014, the Obesity Care Continuum (OCC) submitted formal comments to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding the November 26, 2014, proposed regulations CMS-9944-P entitled, "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA); HHS Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters for 2016." The OCC comments focused on the changes proposed regarding new date requirements for state essential

health benefit (EHB) benchmark plans, discriminatory benefit design, prescription drug coverage and provider network adequacy.

In terms of bariatric surgery, the OCC highlighted the widespread coverage of bariatric surgery across federal, state and private health plans and encouraged CMS to specifically include coverage for bariatric surgery under the hospitalization category of the mandated Affordable Care Act EHB package.

Dr. Vivek Murthy Confirmed as U.S. Surgeon General

During the final hours of the 113th Congress, the United States Senate confirmed Dr. Vivek Murthy to be the next U.S. Surgeon General. On a 51 to 43 vote, the controversial nominee was confirmed. While Murthy faced strong opposition from the National Rifle Association, he did enjoy strong support from the obesity community for his remarks during his Senate confirmation hearing where he stated that we need to “marshal partnerships across the country” to better address obesity. Following the confirmation vote, ASMBS President Dr. John Morton sent Dr. Murthy a congratulatory note and offered ASMBS’s help to the new Surgeon General in his campaign to address our country’s obesity epidemic.

ASMBS State Chapters Begin Outreach Effort on EHB Coverage

During the first two weeks of January, ASMBS leaders held 6 regional conference calls that included representatives from every ASMBS State Chapter as part of the Society’s “Leave No State Behind” campaign to secure coverage for bariatric surgery in the state health exchanges of 28 states that currently exclude coverage for this treatment avenue. The first major effort in this campaign will be for each state chapter to sit down with their respective state insurance commissioner to determine the willingness of the state to update the EHB package to include bariatric surgery coverage.