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Documents Submitted by the Public to the State Employee Benefits Committee

- I. Christina Tarabicos

6/12/2025 Comment

I am writing to respectfully request your support in addressing an urgent healthcare concern impacting many state employees. As a [your job title] working in [your department], I have encountered significant barriers accessing Zepbound (tirzepatide)—an FDA-approved and highly effective treatment for weight-related health conditions—because it is not currently covered under the state’s CVS Caremark-administered prescription drug plan.

Zepbound has shown superior outcomes compared to other treatments in its class, with fewer side effects, better long-term results, and a strong case for reducing downstream healthcare costs. It is manufactured in the U.S. and represents a critical medical advancement. However, state employees currently have no access to it through our prescription plan, limiting healthcare choices and outcomes for many.

I am asking for your administration’s assistance in:

Encouraging the Department of Administration and State Employee Benefits Office to initiate a formal review of Zepbound for formulary inclusion.

Evaluating whether CVS Caremark remains the best pharmacy benefit manager for state employees, particularly in cases where coverage does not align with clinical best practices.

Supporting increased transparency and employee involvement in formulary decisions.

This issue affects not just individual health, but long-term public costs related to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. With access to proven therapies like Zepbound, the state could realize both better outcomes for its workforce and reduced strain on the healthcare system.

I appreciate your continued commitment to the well-being of state workers and respectfully ask for your attention to this matter

6/16/2025 Comment

I spoke during the May 30 SEBC meeting and want to follow up with a few additional points. During that meeting, I requested that the state consider creating a custom formulary that includes Zepbound. Other states—like North Carolina and New York—have done exactly that, proving that the state’s hands are not tied on this issue. There is a path forward that allows Delaware to uphold its mission to provide quality care at a reasonable cost.

I learned during the meeting that roughly 2,200 state employees are affected by this formulary change. I was encouraged to hear some attendees questioning the decision and that there was an influx of emails from concerned state employees also addressing this matter. However, I was disappointed that the SEBC seemed to support CVS Caremark’s choice to cover only Wegovy,

Saxenda, and Qsymia—medications that are less effective and come with more difficult side effects than Zepbound.

During this meeting, it was my impression that the committee did not fully understand the pharmacological differences between these drugs nor the very real challenges patients face with the alternatives. Those side effects don't just affect personal well-being—they also lead to decreased productivity and more sick days which ultimately cost the state in other ways.

Even more concerning, it seems the process to apply for a formulary exemption was presented as a simple and easy alternative solution. In reality, that process creates more red tape and further removes treatment decisions from doctors and patients, placing them instead in the hands of a third-party provider whose business strategy was recently highlighted in *Forbes*. *Forbes*. A business and money magazine. That article made it clear that CVS Caremark's decisions are driven by rebate structures, not patient outcomes. Frankly, anyone who has had to deal with insurance companies can understand how hard it is to advocate for necessary care, and now we've added in yet another party into the decision making, taking doctor and patient further away from the process.

I will continue to urge the committee to revisit this issue with long-term impacts in mind. Preventive care and access to effective treatment now will reduce healthcare costs, improve employee health, and support productivity. Delaware's employees deserve better than a one-size-fits-all policy shaped by third party corporate deals.