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I. Mission Statement

The *ObesityPAC*’s mission is to preserve, protect and defend the inalienable right of the patient with obesity to have safe, effective, equitable and affordable access to care in all of the United States.
II. Letter from the Chair

October 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Since we gathered in Nashville one year ago for ObesityWeek 2018, ASMBS has made great strides in securing coverage for bariatric surgery and other obesity treatment avenues. We continue to publish studies demonstrating the profound impact that bariatric surgery has on durable weight loss and amelioration and even remission of so many obesity-related conditions. We are slowly but surely eliminating barriers and unnecessary hurdles facing those seeking surgical intervention for their severe obesity. We are educating health plans about the need to also provide coverage for comprehensive follow up care.

Though we are making inroads on this front, people with obesity continue to be stigmatized, preventing the effective treatment of the disease. That’s why ASMBS is a founding member and a strong supporter of National Obesity Care Week (NOCW) – a national public awareness campaign to change the way we care about obesity and create a society that understands, respects and accepts the complexities of obesity and values science and clinically-based care.

On Friday, September 20, 2019, advocates from the Obesity Care Advocacy Network (OCAN) visited more than 35 Senate offices to encourage support for S. 595/HR 1530, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA). OCAN’s Fall Advocacy Day was held in conjunction with NOCW and its focus on “advocating for access to affordable and comprehensive care.”

Among the advocates on the Hill that day were ASMBS Access to Care Committee Chair Dr. Joe Northup, Committee Vice-Chair Dr. Margaret Inman and ASMBS Super STAR for the Mid-Atlantic region Dr. Guilherme Campos. In addition to asking Senate offices to support TROA, ASMBS leaders highlighted the benefits of access to care to obesity treatment such as bariatric surgery utilizing a new NOCW infographic on the issue.

At the state level, ASMBS State Chapters are leading the charge – working closely with our patients and colleagues in medicine and nutrition to build multi-disciplinary advocacy teams in every state across the country. It’s basically the ASMBS State Advocacy Representative (STAR) Program on steroids! This new campaign is already paying dividends – with Wisconsin becoming the latest state to get on the board in terms of state employee coverage for bariatric surgery!

In addition, the ObesityPAC is continuing its annual traditions with the ObesityPAC reception where we will honor ObesityPAC Advocacy Award Recipients and Donors. We will continue to plan on making common cause with other societies and industry partners for joint advocacy
efforts, conduct an annual survey of advocacy needs and create annual legislative agenda including universal diabetes and obesity treatment coverage.

In recognition of local needs and in partnership with the Access and State Chapter Committee Chairs, the ObesityPAC unveiled both a State Lobby Toolkit and State Lobby Grant Program to support state chapters with advocacy tools and travel funds for an annual obesity awareness day in their State Capital. To date, we have already issued a number of grants!

Through the ObesityPAC, we have raised more than $225,000 since its inception in 2015 with an 8% member participation rate. The ObesityPAC’s goals are 20% member participation with a $500,000 reserve to fund advocacy efforts on the federal, state, and local level. Imagine if 20 or 30 percent of members choose to support ObesityPAC this year. We could easily double or triple that $225,000! I strongly encourage you to support ObesityPAC so that the ASMBS can continue to educate policymakers about the critical needs of our patients!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chair, ObesityPAC
Past-President, ASMBS
III. *ObesityPAC* Board, 2018-2019

**John Morton, MD FASMBS**  
Chair, *ObesityPAC*  
New Haven, CT  
Bariatric Surgeon

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Board Member  
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ASMBS Executive Director,  
Registered Dietician

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Bariatric Surgeon

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Bariatric Surgeon

**Ann Rogers, MD FASMBS**  
Board Member  
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Bariatric Surgeon

**Jennifer Wynn**  
Treasurer  
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ASMBS Deputy Executive Director

**Nina Crowley, PhD RD LD**  
Board Member  
Charleston, S.C.  
Registered Dietitian
IV. **ObesityPAC Goals, 2018-2019**

- Ensure there is coverage for all forms of bariatric surgery treatment
- Allow for affordable coverage via equitable payments (eliminate high deductibles)
- Protect safety of bariatric surgery through input upon all quality regulatory issues
- Create a national quality measure through National Quality Forum that requires all patients who have an appropriate BMI to have counseling regarding bariatric surgery
- Remove corporate impediments to sound medical care (pre-operative weight loss requirements by insurers)
- Create safe harbors to allow for creation of appropriate bundled payments
- Provide oversight of national self-insured corporations creating national networks to ensure adequate follow-up and access
- Work toward coverage of the entire continuum of care for patients affected by obesity from counseling to medications to endoscopy to surgery
- Establish a sound prevention strategy that is linked to treatment
- Generate strong research funding base for the mechanisms and best practices of obesity prevention and treatment
- Identify and support candidates who are supportive of the **ObesityPAC Mission Statement** regardless of political orientation
- Develop and sustain member interest in the political process as advocates, participants, and candidates
- Bring a national focus to local issues to ensure that advocacy occurs everywhere
- Make common cause with other societies & industry partners for advocacy efforts
- Conduct an annual survey of advocacy needs
- Create annual legislative agenda for universal diabetes & obesity treatment coverage
- State Lobby Toolkit & State Lobby Grant Program to support state chapters w/ advocacy tools & travel funds for an obesity awareness day in their State Capital
- At least 20% Surgeon Member Participation and $100,000 raised annually
- 100% support from ASMBS leadership through the Executive Council, State Chapter Presidents, and Committee Chairs
V. ASMBS Weekend *ObesityPAC* Reception

As a special thank you to our *ObesityPAC* contributors for their support we had an *ObesityPAC* Donor Appreciation Reception ASMBS Weekend 2019 on Friday, June 21st at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile.

Dr. John Morton, *ObesityPAC* Chair and Dr. John Scott, *ObesityPAC* Board Member, with *ObesityPAC* contributors Dr. Teresa LaMasters and Dr. Richard Peterson
VI. *ObesityPAC* Advocacy Award Recipients

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Luke Funk and Dr. Shanu Kothari, of Wisconsin, as the recipients of the 2019 *ObesityPAC* Advocacy Award.

These awards are presented at the *ObesityPAC* Donor Appreciation Reception, this year on November 5th at the Shark Reef Aquarium at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, NV.

The *ObesityPAC* recognizes Dr. Funk and Dr. Kothari for their outstanding commitment in advancing surgical care through advocacy

After a roughly decade-long effort, Wisconsin State Chapter leaders Dr. Luke Funk and Dr. Shanu Kothari succeeded in securing bariatric surgery coverage for Wisconsin State employees through the state’s Employee Trust Fund’s Group Insurance Board. The Access to Care Committee and *ObesityPAC* supported these efforts and applaud Drs. Kothari and Funk for their leadership and collaborative approach with the state medical society and the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in ensuring that state employees will have access to bariatric surgery and associated nutrition services beginning in 2020. The state chapter’s advocacy efforts were also crucial to Dean Health changing its health plan policy to include bariatric surgery coverage for patients with BMI 30.1 – 34.9 with inadequately controlled DM despite optimal medical treatment. Dean Health covers 346,000 lives in Wisconsin.
VII. 4th Annual ObesityPAC Donor Recognition Event at ObesityWeek 2019, Las Vegas, NV

WHEN: November 5, 6:15-7:15 PM
WHERE: SEASCAPE Ballroom at Shark Reef Aquarium at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, NV

WHO: All ObesityPAC Donors

Recognize ObesityPAC Donors & Access to Care Committee Chair, Dr. C. Joe Northup

Meet Past, Present & Future ASMBS Presidents
LaMasters, Hutter, DeMaria, Mattar, Brethauer, Rosenthal, Morton, Kothari & Ponce

Celebrate our 2019 Order of Oval Donors for ObesityPAC
Members who have given >$5000):
Dieter Pohl, MD & Ann Rogers, MD

Honor 2019 ObesityPAC Award Recipients:
Dr. Luke Funk & Dr. Shanu Kothari
VIII. *ObesityPAC* State Chapter Lobby Grants Recipients

**ASMBS Connecticut State Chapter**

On March 1, 2019, a group of bariatric surgeons visited the Connecticut State Capitol and participated in the *Physicians’ Day at the Capitol*. Drs. Papasavas, Floch, Tishler, Tousignant, and Malit had the opportunity to meet with several CT legislators and advocate for SB-317 – legislation “Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery.” The group presented legislators with facts on the benefits of bariatric surgery and the positive impact that the bill could have on the health of their constituents who suffer from obesity. The legislators were very receptive and expressed support for the bill. Even though the bill did not pass in the end, the *Physicians’ Day at the Capitol* was a great experience of Obesity Advocacy for the participants.

Dr. Makram Gedeon speaks to the CT legislators on March 1, 2019

Dr. Pavlos Papasavas, and Dr. Neil Floch, ASMBS Connecticut State Chapter Advocates and Present & Past Presidents

Dr. Makram Gedeon with Connecticut’s Senator Eric Berthel
Wisconsin Chapter’s Advocacy Team on March 19, 2019 at their visit with Mr. Noah Roberts, Health Policy Advisor to Governor Evers: Chrissy Nichols (State Regulatory Specialist for WAND; she works as a Nutrition Program Consultant for the WI Department of Public Instruction, primarily with the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and is a 2015 graduate of the coordinated program in Nutrition and Dietetics at Viterbo University and a 2016 graduate of UW-Madison with a Masters of Public Health), Dr. Luke Funk (ASMBS, Bariatric surgeon, obesity research UW-Madison), Dr. Brandon Grover (Current ASMBS WI State Chapter President, bariatric surgeon who currently practices at Gundersen Health System; U.S. Air Force Veteran), and Dr. Dale Schoeller (TOS, nutritional physiologist with extensive experience as an investigator studying the bioenergetics of obesity and its treatment; he was the first to use the doubly labeled water method to measure total daily energy expenditure in humans under normal, free-living conditions, and has been a member of the executive committees of the American Society for Clinical Nutrition and The Obesity Society and is the Director of Isotope Ratio Core Laboratory at the University of WI-Madison). Not pictured: Mr. Erik Kanter, Hoven Consulting Government Affairs and Communications Associate since 2016; he has been active in Wisconsin politics for a number of years, previously served as a senior legislative adviser for State Representative John Murtha during his time as Assembly Majority Caucus Chair, worked on a diverse range of policy initiatives, was a member of the Assembly Majority communications team, and a legislative aide and a Congressional intern)

The team discussed the Wisconsin obesity burden, state of Wisconsin obesity treatment coverage (or lack thereof), weaknesses of the “WellWisconsin” plan, the state wellness plan that targets obesity but actually covers 0 obesity-related services and costs the state $9,000,000,000, the upcoming group insurance board meeting (5/14/19), and our asks for bariatric surgery coverage and obesity treatment coverage in general. Mr. Roberts will discuss these topics with the Governor and his team, and our hope is that the Governor will at a minimum write a letter to the Group Insurance Board outlining his support for bariatric surgery coverage, or, possibly issue an executive order requesting the Group Insurance Board to cover it.
IX. Advocacy Day in D.C. During OAC’s National Obesity Care Week on September 20, 2019

OCAN Advocacy Day Caps off National Obesity Care Week

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The day also included patient advocates who are addressing their obesity across the care continuum — encompassing counseling and physical activity, medication and surgery. Earlier in the week, several Novo Nordisk patient ambassadors took to the Hill to participate in more than 100 visits with congressional offices as well as share their stories during a special OCAN congressional reception honoring Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) — the lead Republican sponsor of the Senate resolution that designates one week a year as National Obesity Care Week.
X. **2016-2019 ObesityPAC Recipient Honorees**

Senator Tom Carper (D-DE)

Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA)

Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)

Representative Ron Kind (D-WI)
Representative Erik Paulsen (R-MN)

State Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones (D-CA)

State Representative Julio Gonzalez (R-FL)

State Senator Jose Menendez (D-TX)
Governor Tom Wolf (D-PA)

Candidate Amber Huett Garcia for Tennessee Legislature (D-TN)

The ObesityPAC also gave to both Democratic and Republican Nominees for US President in 2016.
XI. ObesityPAC Donors

Order of the Oval donors are the “Trailblazers,” the most influential level of profoundly committed benefactors who have pledged $5,000 or more, demonstrating their deep commitment to political advocacy in Washington. Thank you to our Order of the Oval members!

Stacy Brethauer, MD FASMBS
Chris Eagon, MD FASMBS
Rami Lutfi, MD FASMBS
Rachel Moore, MD FASMBS
Dieter Pohl, MD FASMBS
Ann Rogers, MD FASMBS
Raul Rosenthal, MD FASMBS
President’s Council donors are “Leaders of the PAC.” By pledging $2500-$5000, they demonstrate their deep commitment to political advocacy in Washington. Thank you to our President’s Council members!

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