



Treat Lipodystrophy Coalition
HEALTHCARE COVERAGE
FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

July 5, 2016

The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Re: An Act Relative to HIV-Associated Lipodystrophy Treatment

Dear Speaker DeLeo:

We are 104 Massachusetts physicians who write to urge passage of An Act Relative to HIV-Associated Lipodystrophy Treatment.

Lipodystrophy is a medical condition that requires treatment in order to alleviate profound suffering. Today it affects a small number of our longest term survivors of the HIV epidemic who are generally in their 50s and 60s. They have been denied coverage by insurers for the simple and inexpensive treatments that will repair the disfiguring and debilitating effects of this disease.

As you know, lipodystrophy is a side effect of the first wave of the HIV medications in the late 1990s that transformed HIV from an almost always fatal condition to one that people can now live with over the course of a normal lifespan. These medications saved countless lives, but had unintended, but serious consequence. Those who experience lipodystrophy have abnormal body shape changes that cause a range of harms, including spinal malformation and postural problems, headaches, restricted mobility, neck pain, inability to sleep, depression/anxiety, suicidality, and stigma and discrimination due to the public disclosure of HIV status resulting from some of lipodystrophy's manifestations.

As physicians, we work hard every day to treat patients and eliminate unnecessary suffering. We are distressed that the refusal of insurers to cover lipodystrophy treatment prevents us from obtaining the best health care available for patients with HIV. Treatment of lipodystrophy is basic medical care; it is not cosmetic. It is also sound health policy. It is costlier to address the harm of untreated lipodystrophy (e.g., pain medications, physical therapy, psychotherapy) than it is to treat the underlying disease.

We are proud that Massachusetts has always been and continues to be a national leader in healthcare for people living with HIV. The challenge of untreated lipodystrophy is an omission that needs to be corrected. We hope that you will bring An Act Relative to HIV-Associated Lipodystrophy Treatment to a vote so that people with HIV in Massachusetts can receive the medical treatment that they need.

Sincerely,

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