

February 2, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth

United States Secretary of War
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

The members of the United States Armed Forces are the collective cornerstone of American freedom and prosperity, and their health and fitness are paramount to our national defense. We applaud your commitment to improving the strength of our warfighters as they protect the American people and homeland.

As you have emphasized, rising rates of overweight and obesity among U.S. military personnel pose an urgent threat to readiness, manpower, and the overall health of the force. In April 2024, the American Security Project (ASP) and over fifty signatories sent a call-to-action letter to Secretary Lloyd James Austin III requesting increased access to vital obesity care for military personnel and a review of the process for identifying and treating obesity. The Department's response affirmed our concerns and stated that a review of our recommendations was underway.

We appreciate that you have helped elevate public attention to this issue, including through your *X* post sharing ASP's report on reserve component obesity last May. In addition to your ongoing efforts, urgent action is necessary to ensure that our service members receive the medical care they need to remain a strong fighting force and continue to thrive after the completion of their service.

To this end, ASP, the Obesity Care Advocacy Network, and the following signatories are advocating for:

- **Obesity prevention:** Increased exercise opportunities and enhanced access to healthy foods and beverages per the CDC's federal facility food service [guidelines](#), starting with periodic, service-wide reviews of on-base nutrition environments and nutrition program assessments to inform a wider food transformation strategy.
- **Early intervention:** Referral of service members exceeding weight standards to a medical professional for comprehensive health review and discussion of treatment options.
- **Evidence-based obesity treatment:** Improved access to obesity treatments that have been proven safe and effective, including nutrition counseling, behavioral and lifestyle interventions, FDA-approved obesity medications, and other appropriate medical interventions, as well as implementation of clear policy guidelines for pharmacological treatment to facilitate access.
- **Expanded research:** Additional funding for research assessing the impacts of obesity on military readiness and the potential cost-saving implications of various prevention and treatment mechanisms.
- **Increased education on unsafe practices:** Increased awareness of the health risks and long-term inefficacy of disordered eating and unregulated weight loss substances.
- **Assured treatment coverage:** Reversal of recent cuts to TRICARE coverage of obesity medications, including GLP-1s, for TRICARE for Life beneficiaries and other specialty groups, as well as reopening of provider networks for beneficiaries under TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select.

Given the diverse and evolving security threats facing the United States, it is absolutely essential that we provide our forces with the resources they need to maintain their health and readiness. The Department of War must take action ensuring every warfighter is equipped to take on the personal battle against obesity so that they are prepared to tackle the nation's greatest challenges.

Respectfully,

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A. Philip Randolph Institute	Color of Gastrointestinal Illnesses	National Association of Hispanic Nurses
Advocates for Better Children's Diets	Colorado Obesity Society	National Black Nurses Association, Inc.
Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention	Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service	National Consumers League
Alliance of Sleep Apnea Partners	Common Threads	National Hispanic Health Foundation
American Association of Clinical Endocrinology	Community Liver Alliance	Nevada Chronic Care Collaborative
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine	Diabetes Leadership Council	Obesity Action Coalition
American Diabetes Association	Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition	Obesity Medicine Association
American Diabetes Association/Obesity Association	Fatty Liver Foundation	Ohio Kentucky Chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
American Gastroenterological Association	Fleet Reserve Association	PAN Foundation
American Medical Women's Association	Florida Obesity Society	Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
American Podiatric Medical Association	Gerontological Society of America	Raymond A. Wood Foundation
American Psychological Association Services	Get Healthy Utah	San Antonio Obesity Society
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy	Global Liver Institute	STOP Obesity Alliance
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery	Healthy Savannah	The Mended Hearts, Inc.
American Society for Nutrition	HealthyWomen	The Obesity Society
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists	League of United Latin American Citizens	Vietnam Veterans of America
Better Living Fitness	Looms For Lupus	Weigh to Wellness Denver
Caregiver Action Network	Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.	Western Colorado Weight Care, LLC
Chronic Care Policy Alliance	Lupus Foundation of America	Wisconsin Obesity Society
	MANA, A National Latina Organization	WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
	Missouri Psychological Association	

And the following individual signatories:

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Brigadier General Stephen Cheney

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Former Inspector General, U.S. Marine Corps
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Governor Christine Whitman

50th Governor, State of New Jersey
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