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Testimony of Representative Suzanne Salisbury in support of

**LD 480, An Act to Support Healthy Weight by Providing
MaineCare Coverage for Certain Weight Loss Medications**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Sue Salisbury, and I represent House District 128, which is part of Westbrook. I am here today to testify in support of **LD 480, An Act to Support Healthy Weight by Providing MaineCare Coverage for Certain Weight Loss Medications**.

Like many Americans, I have been overweight most of my life. Also like many people, I have tried many things to lose weight and get healthy. I tried diet and exercise - I was a proud member of Westbrook's Train Your Inner Athlete. I ran 5k's, swam a 1-mile race, and participated in a Spartan race (which almost killed me). I've done Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig and I have even had weight loss surgery. While some of these things worked briefly, they never removed the "food noise." Have you ever heard that phrase? It's the voice in your head that is constantly thinking of eating. Have I eaten enough today, or have I overeaten today? When should/can I eat again? Am I doing enough to get on track? Why is this so hard? After a while, the ups and downs of weight loss, combined with the mental exhaustion of never feeling "enough," is overwhelming.

When I was pregnant with my two daughters, I had gestational diabetes. I was also so sick throughout both pregnancies that I weighed less during those nine-month periods than I had ever in my life, which was irony at its best. I knew that later in life, I would have to be very careful that I did not develop diabetes again. And two years ago, during a physical, it was determined that my A1C level was that of pre-diabetes, so I took more action. I met with a nutritionist and made some life changes. At a three-month check, my A1C had risen, so in consultation with my primary care provider, we decided to try one of the new injectable weight loss medications on the market. We settled on Mounjaro, and within 6 months, my A1C was acceptable, and I had lost 35 pounds. Within about a year and a half of starting, I had lost 116 pounds from my highest weight and have maintained this weight loss, along with lowering my A1C. I have also been able to reduce other medications I was taking, including medicines for high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

One of the hurdles I faced when taking this medication was dealing with insurance. I spent a lot of time getting approvals that initially had to be re-done every three months. I'm part of an online chat with other women in my community who are also taking similar medications and listen to their struggles with insurance approval. Can you imagine how devastating it is to find a medication that makes you feel the best you have in your adult life, only to lose access to it?

According to the National Institute of Health, one in three adults is overweight. More than two in five adults have obesity, and one in 11 adults have severe obesity. The long-term effects of being obese are significant, including the risk of heart attack, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, breathing problems and more. The good news to all of this? There is now a suite of medications found to help people lose weight and keep it off. Now, the challenge is to make those drugs accessible to people who need them the most. Our most vulnerable neighbors, those relying on MaineCare for their healthcare, struggle to access it. These medications, when taken, along with support from their primary providers, will improve their health and save the healthcare industry money by reducing the long-term health risks associated with being obese. I urge you to support LD 480 and vote ought to pass on this important bill.

Thank you for your consideration.