

ADVOCACY NEWS

ADVOCACY ACTION

OAC and Patients Bring National Attention to *Discriminatory* Mississippi House Bill 282

House Bill 282 at a Glance

On Friday, February 1, the OAC became aware of Mississippi legislation targeting those affected by obesity and morbid obesity.

The legislation, titled “House Bill 282,” clearly stated that members of the Mississippi House of Representatives were seeking an act to prohibit certain food establishments from serving food to any person who is obese based on criteria prescribed by the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Reaction to the Bill

Upon reading HB 282, the OAC and patients throughout the country immediately mobilized and issued statements expressing their disappointment with the bill and the legislators.

From an organizational standpoint, the OAC disseminated a news release nationwide calling on the state of Mississippi House of Representatives to withdraw HB 282. This bill clearly discriminated against those affected by obesity by restricting their right to dine in restaurants.

Prior to the bill being deemed “dead,” OAC President/CEO Joseph Nadglowski, Jr., appeared on the CBS Early Show, along with Representative Read, who was a co-author of this Bill. This National appearance brought widespread discussion about the Bill and its effects on the obese population.

The OAC strongly felt that HB 282 was outright discrimination against the obese population and an example of the often misguided attempts proposed to address the obesity epidemic. In fact, studies have demonstrated that discrimi-

nation, ridicule and/or stigma against the obese do not lower obesity rates. Instead, the opposite is true. Those that are the victims of stigma and/or discrimination are more likely to engage in unhealthy eating behaviors.

Advocacy at Work

For one of the first times in history, once the obesity community was discriminated against, it immediately responded with passion and dedication. It was the determination of all those affected by this disease, especially Mississippians, that brought this issue to the national media and assisted in illustrating the discriminatory aspects of HB 282.

Looking Ahead

Each and every day examples of discrimination such as that found in HB 282 are perpetuated and proposed in society. It is up to us, the patients and the OAC, to make a difference and stop this type of stigma.

Advocating to your state representative and letting them know the issues in your state regarding access to care and fair treatment for the obese is extremely important. We must demonstrate the need for access to safe and effective treatment options.

Obesity is a serious health epidemic that targets one in three Americans. It is estimated that more than 93 million Americans are obese, with that number predicted to climb to 120 million in the next five years.

For more information on HB 282, please visit the “Advocacy” section on the OAC Web site at www.obesityaction.org.



OAC Membership

Building a Coalition of those Affected

About OAC Membership

The OAC is a grassroots organization and was created to bring together individuals impacted by the disease of obesity. One of the first steps to getting involved and making a difference is to become a member of the OAC.

Membership allows the OAC to build a Coalition of individuals impacted, bringing a unified voice in obesity. These are the individuals that make up OAC's membership:

- Those who are currently struggling with their weight, whether obese or morbidly obese
- Those who are seeking treatment for their obesity
- Individuals who have successfully and/or unsuccessfully treated their obesity
- Friends, coworkers and family members of patients
- Professionals whose work is dedicated to those affected
- Organizations that support efforts in obesity

You probably find yourself fitting into one of the categories above. This is because obesity affects just about every person in the U.S. and directly impacts more than 93 million Americans. With this number continuing to grow, so must our voice. And that is where **YOU** become an important part in what the OAC strives to do.

Membership Categories and Benefits

The OAC wants **YOU** to be a part of what we do. No matter how you're impacted, having individuals join our efforts who believe in making a difference is essential. That's why the OAC offers various member categories, so you can get involved at your desired level.

Several valuable benefits also accompany your OAC membership, including an annual subscription to OAC News. Each membership category offers something different. To learn more about membership benefits, please visit the OAC Web site at www.obesityaction.org.

Not ready to join the OAC as a paid member?

You can become a "Friend of the OAC" and still have your voice be heard. When joining the OAC in this category, you can get involved in our efforts while receiving electronic benefits. There is no charge to become a "Friend of the OAC." To sign-up, check the box below and complete the application.

Sign me up as a "Friend of the OAC"

Membership Application

Yes! I would like to join the OAC's efforts.
I would like to join as a/an:

- Patient/Family Member: \$20
- Professional Member: \$50
- Physician Member: \$100
- Surgeon Member: \$150
- Institutional Member: \$500 (*Surgery centers, doctors' offices, weight-loss centers, etc.*)
- OAC Chairman's Council: \$1,000 and up

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Information

Enclosed is my check (payable to the OAC) for \$ _____.

Please charge my credit card for my membership fee:

Discover® MasterCard® Visa® Amex®

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____ Billing Zip Code: _____

Mail to: OAC
4511 North Himes Ave., Ste. 250
Tampa, FL 33614

Or Fax to: (813) 873-7838