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Mr. Joseph Nadglowski  
President and CEO  
Obesity Action Coalition  
4511 North Himes Ave, Suite 250  
Tampa, FL 33614

Dear Mr. Nadglowski:

Thanks for your letter about PCRM's billboards. I appreciate the work you do in trying to promote a healthier approach to weight issues. All of us are learning as we go. In that spirit, let me tell you my thinking at the moment and invite you to share whatever information you feel would be helpful.

To state the obvious, overweight increases the risk of diabetes and prediabetes, which already affect more than 100 million Americans, as well as postmenopausal breast cancer and other serious problems. Many children today are at extraordinarily high long-term risk, and overweight is often the first indicator that maladaptive dietary habits are at play.

Cheese consumption has risen dramatically in recent years. Its fat content is enormous, and yet most people seem not to have made the connection with obesity. PCRM's billboards linked cheese to obesity, using objective images of obesity as it is. While some people have called the images shocking, they are exactly what many people see in the mirror every morning. The media response has been one of surprise, indicating that most people had no idea that cheese could play such a role.

A number of people have made the point that some overweight people also suffer from poor self-esteem, often because their weight-loss efforts have not been very successful and because the media portray obesity negatively. Yale's Rudd Center recommends showing overweight people in "diverse activities, roles, careers, and lifestyle behaviors" where the focus is on something other than weight, and not using images of specific body parts.

This approach is useful insofar as it aims to combat discriminatory attitudes, but it is less helpful when the issue at hand is obesity itself. The vast majority of American adults are now overweight or obese, and while self-esteem issues are relevant for some, the opposite situation—a lack of appropriate concern and a lack of understanding of what to do about it—is probably more common. A recent John Hopkins University study showed that overweight doctors were much less

