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October 13, 2017

The Honorable Byron Rushing
Assistant Majority Leader
State House
24 Beacon St.
Room 234
Boston, MA, 02133

Dear Assistant Majority Leader Rushing,

On behalf of the more than 58,000 members of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), I am pleased to offer our continued support for passage of House Bill (HB) 952 – legislation that would make discrimination on the basis of height and weight unlawful in the State of Massachusetts. Specifically, HB 952 would make it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of height and weight in compensation, in terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, housing or public accommodations.

Obesity affects nearly 25 percent of the citizens of Massachusetts and nearly 93 million people across the country. Throughout the last 20 years, obesity rates have doubled among adults, resulting in more than 35 percent of adults living with obesity and an additional 33 percent being overweight. Evidence suggests that without concerted action, roughly half the adult population will have obesity by 2040.

Weight-based discrimination is a prevalent form of unfair treatment against individuals with overweight and obesity. At the root of weight-based inequities, are negative stereotypes that individuals with obesity are lazy, lacking in self-discipline, sloppy, non-compliant, unintelligent and personally to blame for their weight. Although the validity of such stereotypes has been challenged and refuted, these beliefs continue to reinforce societal stigma and perpetuate discriminatory practices in multiple settings. For example, considerable evidence has documented weight-based employment discrimination, showing that employees with obesity face inequities in hiring practices, promotions, wages and job termination.¹

For these reasons, the OAC is pleased to support HB 952 so that employers and service providers will no longer be able to discriminate against the hundreds of thousands of individuals affected by obesity in Massachusetts.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Nadglowski".

Joseph Nadglowski, Jr., OAC President and CEO

¹ Legislating for weight-based equality: national trends in public support for laws to prohibit weight discrimination: RM Puhl, Y Suh and X Li, International Journal of Obesity