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Chris Ender
Executive Vice President, Communications
CBS Corporation

CC:
Tiffany Smith-Anoa'i
Executive Vice President, Diversity, Inclusion and Communications
CBS Entertainment

Dear Mr. Ender,

We are contacting you today on behalf of the more than 60,000 members of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), a national non-profit organization representing individuals affected by the disease of obesity. It has come to our attention that in a recent episode of CBS' Blue Bloods (Rectify), bariatric surgery, a scientifically valid treatment for the disease of obesity, was negatively featured. The storyline addressed whether the police department should require officers to undergo physical fitness tests. To extract concessions from the President of the police officer's Union, Police Commissioner Reagan and DCPI Moore tell President Lyons they had discovered he had undergone gastric bypass surgery. They state variously that: Lyons knew he "couldn't climb the career ladder carrying all that lard;" gastric by-pass surgery is a "cosmetic" procedure, a "shortcut," and the "easy way out;" and that Lyons hadn't "sweated off" the extra weight through self-discipline to set an example.

The OAC, and our members, find this episode to be very offensive on many levels. The statements made by the Reagan and Moore characters are inconsistent with sound medical treatment and greatly contribute to the stigmatization of people with obesity.

Obesity is a serious, complex disease affecting more than 93 million Americans nationwide. The disease is driven by genetics, metabolic adaptations, psychosocial factors, environmental factors and more. It also is associated with a myriad of other conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension and more. Along with these serious medical conditions, people living with obesity carry the burden of being constant targets of ridicule and discrimination in today's society as the dialogue in the episode shows (e.g., as having "all that lard" and not having the discipline to "sweat off" their weight). This weight bias can have a very harmful impact on individuals affected by obesity. Psychological effects include depression, anxiety and poor body image. From a social and physical aspect, weight bias can lead to social rejection by peers, unhealthy weight control practices and more.

Bariatric surgery is a scientifically sound treatment for obesity. Far from being "the easy way out" or a "cosmetic procedure," surgical patients must undertake a complete lifestyle change and maintain it throughout their lives. Surgery is a tool to help manage weight but it is not a cure for obesity and is in no way a shortcut.

It is our understanding that CBS and those affiliated with Blue Bloods have seen the impact of this episode, as social media posts directed toward both groups have surfaced throughout the past week. Unfortunately, we have not seen a response from CBS or representatives of Blue Bloods.

The OAC would like to offer our expertise and help to CBS and those who work on Blue Bloods better understand obesity and the available treatment options. We ask that before either topic is featured in any future episodes, CBS contact the OAC to learn more about this important topic. In addition, we request that CBS feature obesity as part of CBS Cares and work with the OAC on developing this valuable content. If you have any questions or would like to speak with us further, please do not hesitate to contact us. We thank you for your time and look forward to your response and immediate attention to this serious issue.

Sincerely,



Michelle Vicari

Joseph Nadglowski
OAC President and CEO

Michelle Vicari
OAC Chairwoman of the Board



Patricia Nece, JD,
Chair, OAC Weight Bias Taskforce

The Following Organizations Have Signed-on to this Letter in Support of the OAC:

- The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
- The Obesity Medicine Association
- The Obesity Society
- Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness