**Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) President and CEO, Joe Nadglowski, Issues Statement on**

**Trust for America’s Health’s 2021 State of Obesity Report and Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s State-Specific 2020 Data on Adult Obesity Prevalence**

“Yesterday, Trust for America’s Health released their annual State of Obesity Report and the CDC released their State-Specific Data on obesity prevalence. As expected, obesity worsened across many states in 2020 especially with the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic. Nationally, more than 42% of the American population now falls into the obesity category when measured by body-mass-index. Both reports also showed increased rates of obesity in the black and Hispanic communities, another sign that health disparities continue to impact these populations on many levels.

Throughout the past decade, we’ve seen very little improvement in the obesity rates even though we have achieved great milestones in the treatment of this chronic disease. Upwards of 15 years ago, there were very few FDA-approved treatments for obesity. Today, we have six FDA-approved medications, bariatric surgery and devices and well-established behavioral programs. And, the future of treatment looks promising as well with continued investment in obesity from the research, pharmaceutical and surgical worlds.

Despite these promising developments, we expect obesity rates to continue to increase because people with obesity still face two monumental barriers – access to care and weight bias. Access to care continues to be extremely limited in the U.S. Many private and public payors do not provide coverage for science-based obesity treatments. The OAC has long advocated for the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act, which is in Congress right now and would fix this coverage problem for Medicare recipients. We’ve yet to see the passage of this important legislation. Compounded with that, weight bias remains a strong force in all areas of life for higher-weight people. The OAC is aiming to raise awareness of weight bias through our Stop Weight Bias campaign; however, we recognize this is a serious societal flaw that will take continued dedication to change the public perception of obesity and people with obesity.

Reports on the status of obesity are extremely valuable, but if we’re not going to take the disease seriously by providing access to care and stopping weight bias, we will only see obesity rates continue to rise with little hope of any change. As a society, we need to eradicate the thinking that obesity is simply a disease of personal responsibility. We need to start addressing obesity with the same compassion and dedication we would with any other serious disease. Simply put – we need to change the way we care, and we need to do it now.”

To learn more about the OAC’s efforts, please visit [www.ObesityAction.org](http://www.ObesityAction.org). OAC President and CEO, Joe Nadglowski, will also be a featured speaker during the Obesity Care Advocacy Network and National Hispanic Medical Association virtual media briefing calling for Medicare to provide lifesaving obesity care and tackle health inequity set for Friday, September 17th at 10 am EDT. To register for the media briefing, please email sanjali@precisionstrategies.com.

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