



**OAC Urges Senate Labor Committee to Support Passage of
NJ Senate Bill 1631 to Help Combat Obesity Bias & Discrimination
February 4, 2026**

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) appreciates the opportunity to support New Jersey Senate Bill S.1631, which would prohibit discrimination on basis of height or weight under New Jersey anti-discrimination law.

The OAC is the leading national non-profit dedicated to serving people living with obesity through awareness, support, education, and advocacy. Our vision is to create a society where all individuals are treated with respect and without discrimination or bias regardless of their size or weight. We strive for those affected by the disease of obesity to have the right to access safe and effective treatment options. OAC has a strong and growing membership of more than 95,000 individuals across the United States and 2,475 members in New Jersey.

Obesity is driven by powerful underlying biology, not by choice. Obesity is not a personal failure or the sole result of lack of willpower. Obesity is a growing chronic disease in New Jersey with more than 27% of the population living with the disease and another 38% with overweight. Altogether, that's more than 65% of people living in New Jersey who experience overweight or obesity.

Weight bias is holding negative attitudes about people's weight or harming and shaming them because of their weight. Weight bias can exist in every aspect of life including employment, health care, education, media and someone's personal life. It remains a socially acceptable form of discrimination in American society and is rarely challenged. Discrimination can affect self-esteem and opportunities.

Negative perceptions of people affected by obesity exist in employment settings where employees affected by obesity are viewed as less competent, lazy and lacking in self-discipline by their co-workers and employers. These attitudes can have a negative impact on wages, promotions and decisions about employment status for employees affected by obesity. The consequences of being denied a job or rejected in social or public settings can have a serious and negative impact on quality of life.

S1631 would not create special treatment; it would extend the same civil rights framework already in place for other protected characteristics to ensure employment decisions are based on qualifications and performance, not body size. This aligns directly with the committee's mission to promote fair labor standards and protect workers from unjust treatment.

Individuals affected by obesity face both from direct discrimination and more subtle forms of bias that are frequently encountered. We need to help individuals understand what weight bias is and why this type of discrimination is unacceptable. For these reasons, we support S.1631 and appreciate the focus that New Jersey policymakers are placing on finding solutions to address the obesity epidemic in the state. These efforts will hopefully ensure that all constituents are protected from weight-based discrimination.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel to contact me or OAC Policy Consultant Chris Gallagher via email at chris@potomaccurrents.com. Thank you.