



THE OBESITY SOCIETY

Position Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Obesity Society Position on Recent Criticism of Surgeon General Nominee Regina Benjamin

Silver Spring, MD, August 10, 2009, The Obesity Society would like to make known its response to recent criticism regarding President Obama's nomination of Dr. Regina Benjamin, his candidate to serve as the next Surgeon General. Critics have suggested that because Dr. Benjamin is overweight, this sends the wrong message from the person who will be the public face of America's health initiatives.

A person's body weight provides no indication of an individual's character, credentials, talents, leadership, or contributions to society. To suggest that Dr. Benjamin's physical appearance discounts and discredits her qualities and accomplishments is inappropriate, unjust and wrong.

The criticism of Dr. Benjamin is an unfortunate example of the weight bias and stigmatization that is pervasive in North American society. The prevalence of weight discrimination in the United States has increased by 66% in the past decade, and is now on par with rates of racial discrimination.

Stigmatization of individuals who are struggling with their weight results in considerable suffering, impaired quality of life, and wasted potential. There is no place for weight bias in a just, compassionate society. The Obesity Society opposes weight bias and discrimination, including recent criticism of Dr. Benjamin. As the leading scientific organization on obesity, The Obesity Society is committed to increasing public awareness about weight bias and the negative consequences it can have for those affected.

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The Obesity Society (www.obesity.org) is the leading scientific organization dedicated to the study of obesity. The Obesity Society has been committed to encouraging research on the causes and treatment of obesity and is keeping the medical community and public informed of new advances. The Obesity Society's vision is to be the leader in understanding, preventing and treating obesity and in improving the lives of those affected. The Obesity Society's membership comprises 2000 basic and clinical researchers, who have published extensively, and care providers in obesity treatment and prevention.