

HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov

The Honorable Arthur Corvese
Chair, House Committee on Labor
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Corvese,

I am a resident of Cranston, Rhode Island. I write in strong support of The Nick Arjomand No Weight Discrimination Act (H 7883) introduced by Representative Enrique George Sanchez. This bill is crucial to ensure that weight discrimination is prohibited and does not prevent Rhode Islanders from accessing basic civil rights in the form of employment and public accommodations. It will protect people from experiences of weight discrimination that lead to significant harm to individuals across the lifespan.

Currently, it is legal to exclude a person from hiring, promotions, or even to fire them because of body size or weight. It is legal to deny a person housing or rental based on body size or weight. It is legal to deny a person public accommodation in many settings including educational institutions because of body size or weight. Weight discrimination impacts LGBTQ+, women, working class, and people of color at higher rates.

In 2018, a census of over 6,300 people who live in larger bodies (above a women's size 12 for reference), confirm that these experiences are happening at high rates, including 62% reported unable to fit into a facility or its seating, including schools, transportation, and housing; 36% who also identified as disabled reported denial of resources due to body size or weight; 40% reported denial of promotions and job opportunities due to body size or weight.

As a therapist I witness the impacts of weight discrimination on the emotional wellbeing of my clients and can attest that is a very real concern with long term impacts on both mental and physical health outcomes.

In addition, there is a robust body of evidence that shows the impact of weight discrimination leads to negative health outcomes. One local example of the evidence comes from our very own University of Rhode Island. The published research titled *Perceived Weight Discrimination and 10-Year Risk of Allostatic Load Among US Adults* (Vadiveloo & Mattei, 2017) showed that no matter a person's weight, experiences of a weight discrimination posed a 2-3x increased risk to a person's health. These risks impact cardiovascular, inflammatory, glucose metabolism, lipid/metabolic, high blood pressure, and mental health conditions.

I ask the committee to act now to pass H 7883 to protect Rhode Islanders from weight discrimination and ensure that a person's body size or weight does not prohibit them from thriving. Jobs, housing, and employment are all social determinants of health that improve the quality of a person's life, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Allie Scheer, LICSW