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January 22, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the nearly 12,000 members of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), I would like to congratulate you on being elected the forty-fourth president of the United States. Your presidential campaign has inspired millions of Americans, especially young people, to become more active in their government and public service. As you enter the presidency, the OAC looks forward to closely working with your administration to combat our country's obesity epidemic.

The OAC is a national non-profit organization comprised mostly of individuals who have been personally affected by obesity. In addition, our membership includes more than 1,000 healthcare providers who care for those affected. Our strong belief is that obesity, like other diseases, must be both prevented and treated. Those either currently obese, or at risk for developing obesity, and are ready to make a change in their lives, should have expanded access to both prevention and treatment avenues.

One exemplary effort on your part to address obesity was through your sponsorship of legislation to establish nutrition and physical education standards for schools. As you know, obesity is a complex disease. The obese and morbidly obese often experience a wide variety of other health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, sleep apnea and many more. Adding to the challenge, patients are often denied access to critically needed treatment (such as medically managed weight-loss or bariatric surgery) as some payors and employers still do not recognize obesity and morbid obesity as a disease.

During your campaign, you continuously challenged Americans to stand up for change. At the OAC, we fully believe in this mantra and rigorously encourage individuals affected by obesity to become advocates for change. Those personally affected can impact how others view obesity and impact decision makers. As you work to reform our country's health care system, please know that the OAC is ready, willing, and able to serve as a resource on obesity issues. Together, we can work to eliminate the negative stigma associated with this disease, and make sure that obesity is treated as a disease, allowing for increased access to safe and effective medical treatment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James E. Fivecoat".

James E. Fivecoat  
*Chairman*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph Nadglowski, Jr.".

Joseph Nadglowski, Jr.  
*President/CEO*



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Thompson".

Barbara Thompson, MLS, *Vice Chairman*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georgeann Mallory".

Georgeann Mallory, RD, *Treasurer*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Still".

Christopher Still, DO, FACN, FACP, *Secretary*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela R. Davis".

Pam Davis, RN, CBN, CCM

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Haaga".

Jeff Haaga

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie M. Hill-Janeway".

Julie M. Hill-Janeway, BBA, MSA, JD, ABD/PhD

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline Jacques".

Jacqueline Jacques, ND

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Blackstone".

Robin Blackstone, MD, FACS