

In the News: Size Discrimination Around the Country Has Deleterious Consequences for the Nation's Health

- Massachusetts residents share their disappointment in their own experiences with weight and height discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Massachusetts Representative Byron Rushing, sponsor of House Bill 952, explains the bill as a response to this civil rights issue.

"This is one of the last physical aspects of people that you can acceptably laugh about," said Rushing. "You can be a shock jock on the radio and talk about fat people for a solid week and no one would ever think of having you lose your job. It's still acceptable."

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18725638/ns/us_news-life/t/mass-weighs-extending-discrimination-law/#.Wbk-BtOGNmC

- *TIME Magazine* contributor Lesley Kinzel shares her personal experiences with weight discrimination, discussing a study from Vanderbilt University that shows women classified as "heavy" or "very heavy" earn less than their peers across different industries, regardless of education level. A 25-pound weight difference predicted an annual salary penalty of approximately \$14,000 per year for higher-weight women.

"Rather than acknowledge the injustice of fat women being paid less and given fewer opportunities because of how they look, it is easier to assume that they are, intrinsically, worth less as employees. Such an assertion comes naturally in a culture that treats fat women as though they are likewise worth less as human beings."

<http://time.com/3606031/weight-discrimination-workplace/>

- Weight bias hit the political limelight in the 2016 U.S. presidential debate. Donald Trump publicly body-shamed former Miss Universe winner Alicia Machado, for gaining weight after winning the title in 1996. Experts in the field discuss different reasons why these and other similar comments need to be taken seriously and call for action against weight discrimination.

"There has been a big backlash against what has been said recently, and I think that goes to show that it is rising in the public awareness and consciousness that this is not acceptable to do," said Florida State University Assistant Professor Angelina Sutin.

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/29/health/weight-discrimination-obesity-trump/index.htm>

- Texas Hospital Citizens Medical Center in Victoria adopted a controversial hiring policy to consider only those applicants with a body mass index of less than 35 kg/m² as potential employees. Law firm Epstein Becker Green argued against this

policy, while acknowledging that, on its face, this type of discrimination is still legal in many places.

"In Texas, as in most states, such practice is legal. No employment laws, with the exception of one state law (Michigan), and six cities, specifically prohibit weight discrimination."

The firm went on to warn that businesses that practice weight discrimination may expose themselves to liability for actionable discrimination, negative publicity, and employee dissatisfaction. They suggest approaching health in the workplace by offering opportunities for healthy eating and exercise along with other wellness programming of interest to all employees.

<http://www.healthemploymentandlabor.com/2012/04/12/weight-discrimination-in-the-workplace-may-be-legal-but-is-it-a-sound-business-practice/>

Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/>

Contact: striped@hsph.harvard.edu