

# Building a Bigger We – Belonging for Bigger Bodies

## The Impacts of Anti-Fatness

Fat\* people are constantly reminded that the world isn't designed for people like us to participate in it. This limits our access to work, education, travel, the arts, and social connections. And in the case of medical and state bias, it can be lethal.

The effects of othering range from uncomfortable to life threatening:

- Seats, chairs and desks that don't fit
- Uniforms that don't come in our sizes
- Denial of reproductive and gender affirming care
- Lack of access to MRI and other diagnostic equipment
- Medical professionals who treat our size rather than our symptoms, which can lead to missed or incorrect diagnoses
- State violence by police and in prisons that perceive larger people as threatening, despite also blaming us for our own deaths when we are deemed "unhealthy"



## It's Not Personal

Too often, when people consider anti-fatness, they focus on the personal and interpersonal, i.e. efforts to increase comfort with your own body and avoid fat shaming behavior. But the biggest issues are systemic. According to Harvard research commissioned by Dove, in 2019 alone, body size discrimination harmed 34 million Americans.

That's why the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) and Fat Legal Advocacy, Rights, and Education Project (FLARE, a project of Solovay Law) launched the Campaign for Size Freedom. The campaign seeks to strengthen legal protections and shift cultural narratives about body size through education, advocacy, and corporate social responsibility.

## Legislation As a Tool for Belonging

Unfortunately, U.S. laws to prevent discrimination against fat people only exist in 2 states and 8 cities, while more than 80% of Americans support legal protections for people of all sizes. This gap between political will and current reality is a major opportunity.

We know legislation is not a panacea, but prohibiting discrimination based on body size can increase opportunities for fat people to work, play, perform, and learn. In addition to the material impact this has on people's lives, it also builds belonging when we see more fat bodies in more places. Belonging begins with being seen and accommodated, and legislation can pave the way.



## Inspired? Join the Campaign for Size Freedom!

Take action by including body size in your DEI considerations. Sign the Petition: Campaign for Size Freedom



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## \*Why do we use the word fat?

Fat should be a neutral descriptor, like tall or brunette. We recognize that it is a word that carries a lot of trauma for a lot of people, so we use it with care. We believe that the best way to destigmatize the word is to normalize its use.

People sometimes use the words "overweight" and "obese" because they think they're the medical terminology and therefore neutral. From the perspective of fat liberation, those words are not neutral at all, and they are considered by many to be slurs. Both "O-words" assume a universal standard of "normal" or "healthy" size and position fat people in opposition to that standard. We reject this categorization of fat bodies, and we reject languages that pathologizes fat and fat people. We invite you to join us in this approach.

If you or your organization are not yet comfortable using the word fat, feel free to use words like larger bodied, plus sized, or higher weight.

