

## Committee on State Government Affairs

### Statement on Antiracism

2021/2022

The Committee on State Government Affairs (COSGA) is committed to antiracist principles in its administration, member recruitment, operations, educational activities, proposals for advocacy and changes to state level policy, and conduct as an AAP committee. The committee, through the words and deeds of its chair, members, liaisons, and staff, will advance the causes of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the committee and in its support of the Academy's advocacy mission at the state level. Anti-Black racism, attacks against the Asian American/Pacific Islander communities, and a rising climate of hatred and white supremacist extremism and violence are a blight against our nation, our communities, and a [threat to the health and wellbeing of its children](#), and COSGA stands in opposition to all that it represents.

The following are steps that the committee will take beginning this coming year moving forward. As a committee, we pledge to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our actions and policies by taking the following measures:

- COSGA will recognize advocacy engagement as an opportunity for career advancement and professional growth in pediatrics and ensure that the committee's recruitment and nomination practices align with [the Academy's goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion](#).
- Outside of the committee nomination process, the committee will bring new voices and viewpoints to COSGA wherever possible—particularly on issues under consideration where relevant expertise or experience by committee members may not be sufficient—by leveraging the intellectual capital of the AAP membership and its multitude of perspectives.
- The committee will support and actively participate in the Academy's efforts to improve DEI across all of its organizational units and will ensure that these principles are reflected in the programs and activities in which COSGA has a role.

COSGA is uniquely positioned to advance the cause of diversity, equity, and inclusion through advocacy at the state level by promoting antiracist principles in state level changes to public policy. To that end, the committee will support the advocacy work of AAP chapters that supports these aims.

As the nation recently marked the one year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers—and as the COVID-19 pandemic has [laid bare systemic inequities in health](#)—states are beginning to seek policy innovations to address [racism as a public health crisis](#). Four states have taken recent legislative or other policy actions to make statewide declarations of racism as a public health crisis, with the state of Connecticut poised to take similar action as of this writing. These state government actions join over 100 local governments making declarations of racism as a public health crisis in their jurisdictions, and work to draw the attention of policymakers and the public at large to the impact of institutional racism and the role it plays in health inequity. COSGA will play a more

direct and intentional role in promotion of policies at the state level that address root causes of systemic racism that affect the health and well-being of children and families.

Not only must racism be recognized and acted upon as a public health crisis, but in order for the cause of health equity to be fully served in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation's public health infrastructure needs to be strengthened and restored through new commitments to public health funding and workforce. This year (2021) saw a widespread [retraction in the executive branch authority](#) of public health decisionmaking at the state level, and state legislatures must be held accountable for their new-found role in responding to public health emergencies and threats in the future. AAP chapters are uniquely positioned to advocate for the needs of children in this changing environment, and key among the challenges at this time is ensuring equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine and culturally effective measures to combat vaccine hesitancy and promote vaccine confidence.

Additionally, state level reforms of policing and the justice system—particularly as they relate to the treatment of justice-involved youth—are also critical at this time. Such reforms help to serve not only the goals of a just and equitable society across its population, but also to mitigate the potential lifecourse impacts of police involvement, incarceration, and related trauma upon individuals. To that end, the AAP is currently engaged in a project to support AAP state chapter advocacy to advance policy reforms of the juvenile justice system and to educate state policymakers and the public at large on the need for action on this issue. This activity seeks to promote [evidence-based recommendations in AAP policy](#) and [clinical guidance](#) with an emphasis on review of youth cases for potential release from detention to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection, as well as to promote developmentally appropriate, community-based alternatives to juvenile detention. The lessons learned and successful approaches taken will be used to expand effective reforms across the states.

COSGA welcomes the challenge and opportunity to promote and support the Academy's equity agenda within the committee, the Academy, and at the state level. Our commitment to antiracist principles in our work as a committee is steadfast and is essential to our work in advancing the health and wellbeing of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults through state level advocacy.