



## AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ACCESS, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

To the AAAED Membership,

Unprecedented is the only word fit to describe the times we find ourselves in today. We are all concerned about what the coronavirus pandemic means for our health, our livelihoods and our communities. Just like you, I have spent the past few weeks taking in round the clock news coverage about the pandemic, hunkering down with my family at home, practicing social distancing when I venture out for groceries and other necessities, and trying to adjust as I shift the performance of my job exclusively to a virtual space. As we wonder what out of this experience will become our new normal, my role as president of this organization is to make sure you know that, despite the uncertainty of the times we find ourselves, AAAED remains steadfast in providing members the information, resources, and support they need to propel their careers as equal opportunity professionals.

As we contemplated the various government orders to de-densify and limit physical contact, we recognized that our proceeding with the Conference may put our health at risk. This would be antithetical to our purpose. Additionally, when we heard from members about travel and financial restraints they were suddenly facing and forecasted the economic impact this pandemic would have on employers and sponsors, we concluded that our proceeding with the conference in June would be commercially impractical and irresponsible. Therefore, in light of the emergence and spread of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) in the United States and abroad, the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity (AAAED), has voted to cancel this year's national conference scheduled for June 6 – 10, 2020 in Washington D.C.

But as this pandemic has thrust us into unknown territory, and our current circumstances call for adaptation, AAAED intends to find ways to most effectively manage our collective well-being and transition our conference as well as professional training and development programming into virtual formats. Though we will have in-person training when it does not present any health risk, we intend to deliver what we do best – excellent practitioner-based equal opportunity and compliance education – as soon as possible.

So, for those that intended to join us at the Conference in June, please continue to check our web page and your email for notices of upcoming virtual conferences, webinars and other presentations assuredly packed with content that will enhance your ability to perform at a high level. For those that believe they are ready to become conference or PDTI presenters in a virtual space and on a national level, please contact us and share with us your training ideas.

Every one of us is trying to figure out how we can come out of this stronger than we came into it. One way AAAED will do this is by recognizing this moment for what it is – a chance to reset and step up. As we do this, we vow to continue to be there for you, day by day, giving you the information that will allow you to make a positive impact in your organization at a moment in time when every aspect of it

and our lives have been disrupted. But as a boutique organization, AAAED is small and agile enough that we will adapt and cultivate the educational and professional needs of every member.

Through this time, every email, every phone call, every request for support will be heard and responded to. If you need an equal opportunity or affirmative action compliance training, if you need professional development, or if you simply need an encouraging word about this work we do, please let us know. Please continue to use our Career Center for job opportunities, our Twitter page (#theaaaed) and our member listserv to share with us your concerns, observations, and updates on your general well-being. That is why we are here.

You know what else will get us through – the passion we have to be agents for equality and justice. Every day, you and I make organizations less discriminatory and more accessible, equitable, and diverse. Nothing, not even Covid-19, can stop that. We've fought too hard and too long to let that happen.

Take care of yourselves so that you can continue to do that great work. Just know we are rooting for you and that we are here to help.

Wishing you health and strength.

*Richard Anthony Baker*

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