NEWS | POSTED MARCH 21, 2024

Statement on DEI Legislation in Alabama

Yesterday, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey signed into law SB129, a bill that bans state funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in schools, public colleges, and state agencies. In a state with a long and troubled history with racism, it will impose restrictions on teaching what the legislation calls "divisive concepts" regarding race, gender, and personal identities. Additionally, it will forbid transgender people in public universities and colleges to use bathrooms that align with their gender identity. Alabama now joins Florida and Texas, which have enacted restrictive legislation on our members' ability to advance equitable academic and scientific work, and to live freely as themselves on college campuses.

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) strongly opposes and condemns legislation like SB129. As the developmental sciences evolve to respect and better understand the experiences of marginalized communities and diverse populations, SRCD holds firm in our commitment to continue to advance and promote the use of DEI initiatives and instruction. Our discipline is continuing to recognize its roots in privileged, White, Western cultures and is advancing work on the varied developmental processes of people with diverse backgrounds, intersecting identities, and marginalized experiences. We stand with our members who seek to promote our understanding of diverse contexts and the impacts of inequalities and marginalization, regardless of what state or country they live in.

Our students and faculty deserve to study in environments that are free from sexism, sexual harassment, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, sizeism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all other forms of discrimination and harassment. Decades of research has concluded how harmful these hateful attitudes and acts are for students and employees. DEI programs seek to address these harmful practices, among other initiatives. They should not be feared or censured, but embraced as we seek to create more inclusive campuses.

SRCD's committees, caucuses, and task forces will continue to help us advance our mission and strategic goals, including our aim "to integrate the racial, cultural, economic, national, and contextual diversity in all spheres of developmental science," which is essential to the future of our discipline.

In our continuous efforts to tackle marginalization and racism, we look to our upcoming Summit in Panama City: "SRCD Anti-Racist Developmental Science Summit: Transforming Research, Practices, and Policies." This inaugural summit aims to bring together developmental scientists to address critical issues related to racial equity and justice in developmental science.

The Summit builds on other SRCD initiatives, including "Construction of the 'Other': Development, Consequences, and Applied Implications of Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination," our 2022 Special Topic Meeting in Puerto Rico. This successful event examined research from a wide variety of interdisciplinary perspectives to understand how prejudice and discrimination is developed, socialized, or manifested; the consequences of growing up in marginalized groups; and the promising policy and intervention programs that can help prevent the development of prejudice or buffer the effects of marginalization.

SRCD's 2022 Special Topic Meeting "Toward a Holistic Developmental Science: Catalyzing Transdisciplinary Multi-Sector Collaborations to Understand and Support Human Development," touched on the importance of human diversity and developmental science studies that consider diversity.

Our most recent Biennial Meeting in Salt Lake City focused on research that aims to increase behavioral scientists' understanding of antiracism, Indigenous children and families, the impact of displacement due to involuntary and forced migration, and environmental justice.

Finally, our Anti-Racism Task Force has been generously giving their time and contributions to help provide SRCD with a framework for becoming an anti-racist organization. We look forward to receiving the taskforce's final report later this year.

This work is evidence of SRCD's continued commitment to promote and defend diversity in all forms. As other states look to introduce bills like SB129, SRCD continues to work with our coalition partners to advocate for our members and promote evidence-based policymaking that works for all. We encourage our members in states where legislation like this is a threat to let your voices be heard using these resources:

Resources | Scholars Strategy Network

Educational Gag Orders: Legislative Interference in Teaching About Race | AAUP

Advancing Academic Freedom | AAUP

Sincerely,

Vonnie C. McLoyd, Ph.D.
SRCD President
VonnieMcLoyd_2608590.png