

October 1, 2024

Board of Directors
American Academy of Pediatrics
345 Park Blvd
Itasca, IL 60143



FOUNDATION
AGAINST
INTOLERANCE
& RACISM

Sent via email

Dear Members of the Board of Directors:

I am the director of legal advocacy for the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR), a nonprofit, nonpartisan civil rights organization dedicated to promoting a common culture of fairness, understanding, and humanity. Our medical division, FAIR in Medicine, is a professional network dedicated to advancing the highest ethical standards in medical practice, and to promoting a common medical culture based on critical thinking and the pursuit of excellence in all medical endeavors.

I am writing to express serious concerns regarding what appears to be blatant viewpoint discrimination by the AAP in excluding Dr. Nikki Johnson, Director of FAIR in Medicine, from attending your 2024 Annual Conference. Dr. Johnson, a board-certified pediatrician who has regularly attended medical conferences to earn her continuing medical education credits as required for her licensure, had her registration accepted, only to have it suddenly revoked without any explanation or justification. This raises significant questions about the AAP's commitment to fostering an open, inclusive dialogue among medical professionals.

The timing and manner of this decision suggest that Dr. Johnson's exclusion may be linked to her outspoken criticisms of certain public health measures, such as mask mandates, vaccine requirements, and lockdown policies related to COVID-19. Additionally, Dr. Johnson's advocacy for evidence-based decision-making concerning "gender-affirming" medical treatments—another contentious topic within the pediatric community—may have influenced this abrupt revocation.

If the AAP is indeed acting in response to Dr. Johnson's viewpoints on these matters, this represents a troubling form of viewpoint discrimination. A medical organization as prestigious as the AAP, whose mission is to promote the highest quality healthcare for children, should encourage—rather than suppress—diverse professional perspectives, especially on complex and evolving issues. By excluding individuals based on their viewpoints, the AAP severely compromises its credibility and betrays its commitment to fostering scientific inquiry and advancing medicine. More critically, such discriminatory actions erode the trust of both your

members and the wider public, undermining the very foundation of open dialogue that is essential to progress in healthcare.

Healthcare professionals are called to consider a wide range of evidence and perspectives to ensure the best possible outcomes for patients. Silencing professionals with differing opinions, particularly when those opinions are grounded in valid medical and scientific concerns, runs counter to the core principles of medicine and open scientific debate.

I urge the AAP to reconsider its decision and provide a transparent explanation for Dr. Johnson's exclusion. The integrity of your organization, and your commitment to promoting open dialogue and evidence-based care, depends on your willingness to engage with and consider all viewpoints, not just those that align with a popular opinion.

I look forward to your prompt response and an explanation of how this situation aligns with the values of inclusivity and open discourse that the AAP claims to uphold.

Sincerely,

Leigh Ann O'Neill

Leigh Ann O'Neill
Director of Legal Advocacy
Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism