



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Our Work Is More Critical Than Ever. Time to Raise Our Voices Even Louder.**

*Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance, to the Afterschool Field*

“These are enormously difficult times, and every child and every family has been affected by the health and justice crises our country is facing. All of us in this field have dedicated ourselves to promoting equity by improving access to high-quality afterschool and summer programs. We have long recognized the racism and injustices that are now convulsing the nation, and our responsibility to fight for a better, just world.

As people who work with children, we recognize, too, our special responsibility to support kids and families and help them through these challenging times. The pandemic laid bare the deadly impact of the disparities that pervade our health care system, and the murder of George Floyd was a stark and painful reminder that racism is ever-present in our criminal justice system. Sadly, in America the color of your skin matters and too often that means people face bias, discrimination, hatred – and violence. The anger, pain and fear that creates are truly devastating. We must help make this moment a call to action for real, lasting change.

I am so proud to work with all of you at the national, state and local levels. Our expertise in positive youth development and our growing expertise in trauma-informed care is needed, now more than ever. Buildings can be repaired and windows replaced, but lives cut short are lost forever. While undoing the damage from centuries of discrimination and trauma is not possible, we can try to mitigate its ongoing effects if we all do our part.

I am energized by our youth. They are speaking out, standing up to injustice, and calling out the abuse of power. As a field, we must continue supporting them, now and in the months and years ahead as we prepare them to succeed in school and in life.

Now is the time to do even more.

If you are not already talking about race and racial justice with youth, start. Continue and re-double your efforts to provide culturally responsive programming and help empower the youth and families you serve. Reach out to your members of Congress – insist on more funding for the afterschool and summer programs that give resources and tools and create opportunities for all of our kids. When we do that, we can look in the mirror and know that we are fighting for a just and equal society.

We at the Afterschool Alliance are committed to addressing racial inequity in our own work and recognize that this is an ongoing process that will require intentional thought, education, and action. We don't have all the answers, and will make mistakes, but accept fully our responsibility to keep striving, learning, and sharing.

Please let us know what we can do to support you during these times. We will continue doing all we can to expand and support your work. And we will continue sharing resources to help our field address the inequities that are so deeply rooted in our society. Be well and thank you for all that you do.”

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*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at [www.AfterschoolAlliance.org](http://www.AfterschoolAlliance.org)*