

The Gravens Conference: Our Message to the Supporters, Attendees, and Participants in Gravens Conferences

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We want to acknowledge concerns regarding holding the 2024 meeting in Florida. For all those who have communicated your thoughts about attending the meeting, we want you to know that we appreciate your forthrightness and wish to offer a statement of our collective thinking on this important matter. As our society continues to grow more diverse and connected, it is vital that we acknowledge the ways in which the social and political climates continue to affect how we live, move, and interact.

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Our Gravens community seeks to affirm our commitment to addressing issues of racism and bias and audit our systems to ensure that we are proactive in the implementation of strategies that promote health equity and social justice. We strive to provide a space that is supportive, inclusive, and welcoming to all individuals involved in the physical and developmental environment of the neonatal intensive

care unit (NICU), including family members, healthcare providers, designers, and industry supporters.

“Some of the current policies and practices in the state where the Gravens conference is historically held, however, are not consistent with the ideals and values of the Gravens community. The Co-Chairs and Planning Committee are reviewing all opportunities to ensure that the individual identities and lived experiences of those most impacted by the current political landscape are valued and respected.”

The Gravens community approach is to remain non-political. Some of the current policies and practices in the state where the Gravens conference is historically held, however, are not consistent with the ideals and values of the Gravens community. The Co-Chairs and Planning Committee are reviewing all opportunities to ensure that the individual identities and lived experiences of those most impacted by the current political landscape are valued and respected.

Should you choose to attend the conference in Clearwater in person, we hope you recognize that there are those whose livelihood depends on tourism and who do not hold the same views as Florida's current prevailing social and political environment. In that way, you can support small businesses, specifically those that are owned by people of color.

“The Planning Committee for the 2024 Gravens Conference has discussed at length the pros and cons of going forward with holding our meeting in Florida, given the recent political decisions there that threaten an open and inclusive society.”

As we look to planning for upcoming Gravens meetings, our priority is to ensure that all attendees can participate in an environment that is safe and welcoming. The Planning Committee for the 2024 Gravens Conference has discussed at length the pros and cons of going forward with holding our meeting in Florida, given the recent political decisions there that threaten an open and inclusive society. We have explored the possibility of moving the conference to another state; however, we will not be able to do so for the 2024 conference due to fiscal and contractual obligations. We are actively exploring alternative sites for future meetings.

We understand that diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice are principles that must work together to result in fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all. Therefore, we respect each participant's decision to attend the conference either in person or virtually and hope that you will join us in whatever format suits you best. Through our perseverance and dedication to advancing the care for infants and families, we aim to continue to promote our message of inclusivity and health equity.

Regardless of your position on attending the Gravens conference, you might like to use these strategies right now to make a difference:

- Commit to learning and reflecting on

the many ways that racism and bias impact us today and how our history led us here.

- Vote for political candidates that are in line with your values.
- Use your voice, lived experience, and privilege to bring awareness and action to address disparities in health outcomes and healthcare quality.

“We are continuing to work to ensure that the co-chairs, planning committee, and conference attendees reflect both the workforce and the people they serve so that we can best meet the needs of our field. You can support the Gravens Conference Diversity Fund to help ensure the participation and growth of our ever-changing society.”

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Together, we can create environments where every individual or group will be fully and authentically welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to equitably shape the world for future generations.

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