NATSAP Orlando Statement

Regarding our upcoming conference in Florida, we understand that some of our members may have concerns about holding our conference in the state. We genuinely respect and empathize with these concerns.

At NATSAP, creating a safe and inclusive environment for all participants, regardless of their political affiliations or beliefs, is of utmost importance. Our core values focus on prioritizing an individual’s safety and well-being while embracing diverse backgrounds, promoting ethical and professional dialogue, and showing respect for differing perspectives. We firmly believe that through considerate and professional engagement, we can foster greater understanding and unity within our community.

Choosing a conference venue is a complex decision influenced by various factors. Six years ago, when we initially selected Florida, we thoroughly considered aspects such as accessibility, available facilities, local expertise, visits to local programs, and more. Our primary goal remains unchanged: to provide a platform where participants can share knowledge, collaborate, and grow professionally while ensuring that everyone feels valued and heard.

- We understand the concerns about hosting our Annual conference in Orlando, Florida. It’s important to clarify that our conference is primarily focused on professional development through education, research, and networking opportunities, rather than politics.

- Furthermore, we acknowledge the economic impact of such decisions. Cancelling the event would not only affect our members but also low-wage travel and hospitality workers. With our long-term contract with the conference hotel, the financial penalties would significantly hamper NATSAP’s ability to provide essential services to our members throughout the year and may actually lead to NATSAP’s closure.

- NATSAP organizes conferences in various locations across the country, aiming to alleviate the travel challenges faced by our members from different regions and around the world. Choosing Orlando as our location allows us to leverage local expertise and resources for the benefit of all NATSAP members and participants. We believe that fostering a platform for learning and supporting colleagues from diverse regions across the country will promote a rich exchange of perspectives and insights.

- Engaging with various communities and regions is crucial for professional growth. By hosting the conference in Orlando, we can connect with local members, researchers, and students who can offer unique perspectives, enriching our understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by students, educators, and marginalized communities.
• **Furthermore, we acknowledge the economic impact of such decisions.** Cancelling the event would not only affect our members but also low-wage travel and hospitality workers. With our long-term contract with the conference hotel, the financial penalties would significantly hamper NATSAP's ability to provide essential services to our members throughout the year.

• **We want to underscore our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where all perspectives are valued and respected.** The City of Orlando received the highest score on the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Quality Index for the ninth consecutive year. Additionally, Disney has demonstrated an awareness of Florida's conservative politics while also making earnest efforts to support marginalized groups through various initiatives and actions. We can provide meaningful support to these local endeavors by coming together as a community in the Orlando area.

We understand the emotions and differing opinions regarding our decision to hold the conference in Orlando. We value respectful dialogue and are committed to addressing concerns with empathy and professionalism. We believe this location offers valuable opportunities for growth, knowledge sharing, and networking.