



February is Black History Month, a time to reflect on Black Americans' role in shaping our country's history and to consider how far we still must come to create a truly inclusive and just nation.

At Easterseals, inclusion is central to everything we do: Our mission is to ensure that all people, regardless of age, race, background or ability, are 100% included and 100% empowered. We advocate for those who have been silenced, ignored or marginalized, and we're committed to bringing visibility to the stories and particular challenges of minorities with disabilities. Never has this been more important.

Unfortunately, we live in a society with systemic inequalities that create significant barriers for minorities, especially those with disabilities. More than 5.6 million Black Americans are currently living with a disability, and a staggering 40% of Black Americans with a disability live in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened existing inequalities, presenting even greater challenges to minorities with disabilities.

Easterseals is committed to ensuring that communities of color are informed of and able to access all of our programs and services. We've established the [Black Child Fund](#) to help end racial disparities Black children face in health care, child care and education. And as part of this initiative, I was honored to join the National Black Child Development Institute in a panel discussion that addressed the increased challenges Black children and their families are facing due to the pandemic. [You can click here to watch the discussion and learn more about this important issue.](#)

As systemic racism and injustice came to the forefront of our country's consciousness last year, it was incredibly inspiring to see so many people in our community having honest, productive and, let's face it, *difficult* conversations about systemic racial inequality. I know it's challenging, but having these difficult discussions, recognizing injustice and speaking out against it, is how we'll create the truly inclusive society our ancestors dreamed about.

I want to thank each and every member of this community for your partnership in this vital work. There is much more to do, but I am inspired by the progress we are making and honored to have you on this team. I truly believe that together, we can and will build a more inclusive, just society where everyone, regardless of age, race, background or ability, is fully empowered to live their best life.

Thank you again,

Angela F. Williams, President and CEO