Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-racism Statement

As health professionals, we are committed to the idea that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to live a healthy life. We see first-hand that climate change is harming everyone's health now and creating grave risks to our future health. Our mission is to advance climate solutions that will protect and improve every individual's chance for good health. While everyone's health is threatened by climate change, some of us are suffering more now and will suffer more in the future unless we identify and respond to the needs of those who are most vulnerable. Some people are more vulnerable because of medical conditions or because of their young or older age; others are more vulnerable because our society has created unfair conditions that have made them more vulnerable.

The truth we must face is that both historically, and still today, our society devalues the health and well-being of some people because of the color of their skin. Through a reinforcing network of laws, policies, and institutional practices, many people of color have reduced access to a healthy life. Because it is "built into" the lives of the people suffering from this discrimination, often over many generations, it is called "structural racism."

From a health standpoint, this means some people, through no fault of their own, are starting two steps behind, not only in accessing health care, but also in accessing the conditions on which everyone's health depends, including fresh food, clean water, and clean air. We see the effects of this structural racism on the health of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) living in the United States. These include increased cumulative exposures to environmental hazards and poor living conditions. For example, they suffer from disproportionate exposure to transportation-related air pollution in urban transportation corridors and increased heat and air pollution-related illnesses in formerly red-lined low-wealth communities lacking green spaces.

Making matters worse, these exposures, together with the ceaseless challenges created by persistent racism and poverty, create toxic stress – the prolonged activation of the stress response – which makes it harder for the body to recover fully, leading to lifelong acute and chronic illnesses. The environmental exposures and the stress they induce make those who suffer from structural racism more vulnerable to the most common adverse health consequences of the climate crisis, such as worsened asthma and heart disease, preterm birth, and learning disabilities.

The Consortium recognizes that addressing structural racism is essential to achieving our mission of ensuring a healthy climate future for everyone and is committed to addressing structural racism in our internal and external work.

We share our goals here publicly as an invitation to join in this work and hold us accountable.

To achieve a more equitable and just climate future for all, the Consortium commits to:

- Promoting climate policies and activities that advance health equity and racial justice in collaboration with our partners at the local, state, and national levels.

- Engaging our members, affiliates, and partners to directly address and incorporate anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in their membership, policies, and practices, and advocacy.

- Being a living example of these commitments by developing a Consortium workforce that is representative of the nation's diversity and by implementing policies and practices that give each team member an opportunity to grow in their knowledge, skill, and engagement in diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist activities on the issues in order to thrive in the workplace.

To accomplish these commitments the Consortium has developed a DEI-A plan with several key goals. As we implement our plan, we will monitor our progress and update it as we work with our stakeholders across the country to achieve climate and health equity and justice.