

September 24, 2025

To the California Racial Equity Commission and Staff:

On behalf of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services (CA Alliance), we would like to thank you for the system altering work involved in the development of the draft Racial Equity Framework (REF) and express our appreciation for the opportunity to offer feedback.

The CA Alliance represents 165 nonprofit, community-based organizations (CBOs) serving the state's most vulnerable children, youth, and families through behavioral health, education, foster care, prevention, and juvenile justice programs and services. In addition to the critical services our members provide to these communities daily, our Policy Team works to advance policies that prioritize equity and address systemic barriers that impact the health and safety of children, youth and families of color, who are disproportionately represented in the foster care and juvenile justice systems. The implementation of the REF will be a historical step toward real systems change and the CA Alliance is proud to support it.

We must also acknowledge the broader national context and cruciality of the REF in the moment. The Commission's work comes at a time when Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, immigrant rights, and refugee protections are under unprecedented attack at the federal level. Since January 2025, the Trump Administration has issued over 100 Executive Orders—including several that seek to eliminate DEI initiatives (EOs 14151 and 14148) and halt refugee protections (EO 14163). These actions are already having a chilling effect on advocacy and threatening hard-won progress. The federal rollback of equity efforts underscores just how urgent and necessary this work is. California must not only protect—but expand—our commitment to racial equity, and the REF is a critical vehicle to do so.

In the spirit of partnership and support, we respectfully offer the recommendations below to further strengthen the REF and help ensure a smooth rollout. We encourage the Commission to be bold, specific, and directive with their language throughout the Framework.

Recommendation #1 – Be Bold: Use language that directly acknowledges the root causes of racial inequities the framework aims to address.

The Commission has been entrusted with leading California toward racial equity and addressing the urgent inequities facing communities statewide. We encourage the Commission to directly name historical challenges, including root causes and impact of systemic racism in the introduction and executive summary of the REF. We also encourage the inclusion of a call to action for department heads and agency chiefs to take accountability for the work by issuing directives, allocating budgets, and mandating the necessary policy and practice changes. We recommend looking to external models, such as the Reparations Task Force Policy Recommendations and Oregon's 2021 statewide equity framework, which provide examples of bold, actionable statewide directives that California can build upon.

Recommendation #2 – Be Specific: Provide a clear and specific roadmap for implementation across state agencies.

For the REF to be fully operationalized, it must provide government entities with a clear, standardized path forward. We recommend that the Commission outline a sequenced, step-by-step process that agencies can follow to implement the REF, focusing on its four core elements: community engagement, budget, data, and governmental infrastructure. To ensure consistent, measurable progress toward equity, the Commission should provide templates or baseline plans for departments and agencies to adapt within their domains of influence.

We would like to highlight available resources to support implementation of specific roadmaps such as the California Racial Equity Coalition (CREC) Budget Tool Brief, Racial Equity Framework Brief, Prop 209 Orientation (2024), and 2025 Framework Recommendations, as well as the national *State of Equity* study (Public Health Institute, 2023). These resources already identify best practices and implementation strategies that can be standardized into agency templates.

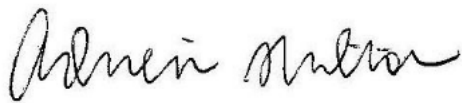
Recommendation #3 - Be Directive: Use language that mandates implementation of the changes outlined in the REF.

To translate values into practice, state entities need clear directives tied to specific roles and responsibilities. We recommend that the Commission use strong directive language (“shall,” “must”) rather than permissive terms (“may,” “could”). The REF should identify which government entities should lead on each recommendation and outline the specific actions they are responsible for taking. To ensure sustainability of REF implementation, we also recommend tracking policy recommendations to inform the Governor and Legislature of the statutory or structural changes needed to mandate racial equity within government operations.

The CA Alliance believes the Racial Equity Framework can be transformative if it is bold, specific, and directive. We urge the Commission to embrace this historic opportunity and to adopt a framework that goes beyond aspirational statements to deliver measurable outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities across California. Now more than ever, the Commission’s leadership is vital to protecting our communities and demonstrating that California will not back down in the face of regressive policies. By naming the root causes of inequities, providing clear and practical tools for implementation, and issuing strong directives to government leaders, the Commission will create a framework that drives real change and sets a national standard for equity-centered governance.

We look forward to continued partnership as you finalize the REF and uphold California’s position as a bold innovator that embraces and prioritizes true racial equity. The CA Alliance is excited to support you in bringing this vision to life.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Shilton
Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Strategy
California Alliance of Child and Family Services