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AAA® Continues Ongoing Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

American Arbitration Association® Signs Ray Corollary Initiative™ Pledge for ADR Providers; 11th Class of Higginbotham Fellows Accepted Into Program for Up-and-Coming Diverse ADR Practitioners

NEW YORK, N.Y.—April 11, 2023—The American Arbitration Association (AAA) announces that it has signed the [Ray Corollary Initiative™](#) (RCI™) Pledge for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Providers, an industry effort to increase the number of women and racially and ethnically diverse ADR professionals who serve as arbitrators, mediators, and other neutrals.

In 2022, 35% of arbitrators selected by parties from AAA-generated lists of potential neutrals met diversity criteria, while 41% of new additions to the AAA Roster were women and racially and ethnically diverse professionals.

“Our organization has been involved in various efforts to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in arbitration and mediation, as well as the overall legal profession, since the 1960s,” said **Ingeuneal Gray, Esq., Vice President of the American Arbitration Association and Co-Chair of the AAA’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee**. “The Ray Corollary Initiative is a very positive development with a mission we fully support, and we are glad to join with other ADR providers, firms, and users in giving parties more opportunities to choose neutrals from groups who have been traditionally underrepresented in our field.”

Over the past few years, AAA lists have averaged over 30% in diverse neutrals, with many lists offering an even higher percentage of potential arbitrators who are diverse. In 2023, the AAA decided to formally raise the diversity threshold in its case management tool from 20% to 30% to better reflect its practice. In addition, the AAA has expanded the diverse categories in its case management tool to include not only Race/Ethnicity and Gender, but also Disability, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation.

The AAA has internal and external committees that meet on a regular basis to advance DEI in ADR. The American Arbitration Association-International Centre for Dispute Resolution® (AAA-ICDR®) Council's **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee** of legal and ADR professionals provides insight into the marketplace. In addition, the **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee** of AAA executives and staff coordinate initiatives and collaborate with firms and organizations, offering support, sponsorship, and training to help create opportunities for diverse practitioners. The AAA actively recruits highly qualified women and racially and ethnically diverse arbitrators and mediators—many of whom serve on its **National Roster of Arbitrators and Mediators**, assist in leading education programs, and share their expertise in publications. To learn more, please visit <https://www.adr.org/dei>.



“It isn’t enough to simply want change—we have to be that change. This is the approach we at the AAA have long embraced with regard to more representation for diverse arbitrators and mediators,” said **Ann Lesser, Esq., Vice President of the American Arbitration Association and Co-Chair of the AAA’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee**. “As the global leader in ADR, we have a duty to lead by example. We hope more members of our industry will join us in making DEI a core aspect of everything we do, both internally and externally.”

The AAA’s programs and initiatives to increase the number of ADR practitioners from diverse, underrepresented groups include:

- **The AAA’s A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. Fellows Program:** Established in 2009 to provide training, networking, and mentorship for up-and-coming diverse ADR practitioners, program participants are required to complete a self-study component, as well as intensive interactive training at the AAA’s New York headquarters, which includes seminars on dispute resolution as well as mock arbitrations and mediations. Higginbotham Fellows can also receive additional training and networking opportunities during the program, and are paired with mentors in their field of interest. The 11th class of Higginbotham Fellows, including 20 professionals from across the country, have recently been selected to begin the program.

Since inception, 149 Higginbotham Fellows have completed the program—and almost all Fellows who applied have advanced to the AAA Roster, with many of them selected to serve on cases. Several Higginbotham Fellows have also been elected to the AAA-ICDR Council. For more information about the program, please visit <https://www.adr.org/higginbothamfellowsprogram>.

- **Diversity Scholarships from the AAA-ICDR Foundation®:** Thanks to a special gift by the AAA, the AAA-ICDR Foundation established the [Diversity Scholarship Fund](#) in 2021. The Fund provides diverse law students and professionals with up to \$2,000 in financial assistance toward participation in a degree program or fellowship in ADR, or toward attendance at a well-recognized conference.

In 2022, the AAA-ICDR Foundation granted 31 scholarships totaling \$49,637, including \$1,300 stipends to 20 students to cover travel and hotel expenses during the **AAA’s Diverse Student ADR Summit**, held at the AAA headquarters in New York from November 12-13, 2022. The conference provided law students from diverse backgrounds with the opportunity to learn from experienced ADR professionals and litigators about how to forge a successful career as an arbitrator or mediator.

In addition, the **AAA-ICDR Foundation** established diversity scholarships at Howard University and North Carolina Central University, two historically Black colleges and universities offering certificates in dispute resolution programs in their law schools. Both scholarships involve a three-year commitment of \$150,000 (\$50,000 annually) to grant scholarships to second- or third-year law school students pursuing certificates in their schools’ dispute resolution programs.



AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION®

NEWS ALERT

About the American Arbitration Association

The not-for-profit American Arbitration Association® (AAA®) is the leading provider of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services for parties in commercial disputes, having administered more than seven million ADR cases since its founding in 1926. With 29 offices in the United States, in addition to Singapore, the AAA provides organizations of all sizes in virtually every industry with ADR services and products. For more information, visit www.adr.org.

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