NATIONAL CENTER

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November 10, 2026

RE: Bipartisan Support for *Olmstead* Protections in FY 2027 Appropriations

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the undersigned 136 national, state, and local organizations that serve individuals with Down syndrome from 47 States and the District of Columbia, we urge you to work together in a bipartisan manner to protect the rights of people with Down syndrome and other disabilities to live in their communities. Specifically, we ask you to support language in the FY 2027 appropriations process that reaffirms Congress's commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) integration mandate and the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision and support for continued federal enforcement of these longstanding civil rights protections.

For generations, children born with Down syndrome were routinely placed in institutions, often because their families were told they would never learn, work, or lead meaningful lives. Many spent their entire lives separated from their families and communities, denied opportunities to attend school, build friendships, hold jobs, or make choices about their own lives. Today, thanks to decades of advocacy and advances in disability rights, expectations and opportunities have been transformed. People with Down syndrome are growing up with their families, attending neighborhood schools, working alongside people without disabilities, building relationships, and living in homes of their choosing. This progress reflects hard-won civil rights protections that recognize the dignity, abilities, and potential of people with Down syndrome.

The Supreme Court's landmark 1999 decision in *Olmstead v. Lois Curtis (and Elaine Wilson)* was central to that progress. *Olmstead* affirmed that unjustified institutionalization of people with disabilities constitutes discrimination under the ADA. For more than 25 years, it has helped protect the right of people with disabilities to receive services in integrated community settings rather than being unnecessarily segregated in institutions. At its core, *Olmstead* ensures that people with disabilities have meaningful choices about where they live and receive services, rather than being forced into segregated settings because they need support.

For people with Down syndrome, *Olmstead* is not an abstract legal principle. It directly affects where and how they live their lives. Many adults with Down syndrome need ongoing assistance with daily activities, transportation, employment, and other aspects of community living. Medicaid home-and community-based services (HCBS) provide critical supports that make it possible for them to live in their communities, be employed, maintain relationships, and pursue their goals. For aging parents, these services also provide reassurance that their adult children can remain in their communities when family circumstances change. No one should have to give up their home, job, friendships, or independence simply because they have Down syndrome and need support.

People with Down syndrome themselves have been clear about what they want: opportunities to live in their communities, make choices about their lives, work, build relationships, and belong. Self-advocates have fought for these rights and continue to lead efforts to advance inclusion and independence. Their voices must remain central to decisions about the policies and services that affect them.

Yet recent federal actions have raised serious concerns about the future of these protections. In June 2026, the Department of Justice issued a memorandum adopting an extremely narrow interpretation of the *Olmstead* decision and stating that there is no integration mandate in the ADA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This memorandum called into question the federal government's longstanding approach to protecting people with disabilities from unnecessary institutionalization. In September 2026, a federal court in *Texas v. Kennedy* vacated provisions of the 2024 Section 504 regulations that reinforced protections against unnecessary segregation in institutional settings. Although the ADA's integration mandate and the Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision remain binding law, these developments raise serious concerns about the future of federal enforcement and whether states will continue to prioritize community integration. Without strong federal leadership and enforcement, people with Down syndrome and other disabilities could face greater barriers to receiving the supports they need to remain in their communities.

Protecting *Olmstead* is both a civil rights imperative and sound public policy. Decades of research and experience have demonstrated that home-and community-based services (HCBS) can provide high-quality, individualized supports at a lower cost than institutional care. These services promote independence, strengthen families, and enable people with Down syndrome and other disabilities to live, work, and participate in their communities while making responsible use of limited Medicaid resources.

The ADA was enacted with overwhelming bipartisan support, reflecting a shared commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can participate fully in American society. Protecting *Olmstead* continues that bipartisan legacy. We cannot—and must not—return to a time when people with disabilities were segregated from society simply because they needed support. The right to live in one's community should not be a partisan issue. We urge you to work together to preserve the promise of *Olmstead* and ensure that current and future generations of people with Down syndrome and other disabilities can continue to live, work, and thrive in the communities they call home.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to protecting the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities. If you would like further information, please contact Heather Sachs, National Down Syndrome Congress Policy & Advocacy Co-Director, at Heather@ndsccenter.org.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned 136 National, State, and Local Organizations that Serve People with Down Syndrome from 47 States and the District of Columbia

<u>NATIONAL</u>
American Association on Health and Disability
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Down Syndrome Association
Coalition on Human Needs
GiGi's Playhouse
Global Down Syndrome Foundation
Little Lobbyists
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion
National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC)
National Down Syndrome Society
National Disability Action
National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities & Dementia Practices (NTG)
The Arc of the United States
The Collaborative IEP
1in6 Support

Alabama
Coastal Alabama Down Syndrome Society
Down Syndrome Alabama

Alaska
Alaska Down Syndrome Network

Arizona
Down Syndrome Network Arizona

Arkansas
Arkansas Down Syndrome Association
Down Syndrome Association of Memphis & MidSouth
Down Syndrome Connection of Northwest Arkansas

California
California Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
Club 21 Learning and Resource Center
Down Syndrome Association of Central California
Down Syndrome Association of Santa Barbara County
Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area
Down Syndrome Foundation of Orange County
Silicon Valley Down Syndrome Network
WeBelong: Everywhere

Colorado
Rocky Mountain Down Syndrome Association
Disability Justice

Connecticut
Down Syndrome Association of Connecticut

Delaware
Down Syndrome Association of Delaware

Florida
Care Coordination Management Group
Down Syndrome Association of Brevard, Inc
Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida
Down Syndrome Association of Tampa Bay 21 Strong
Gold Coast Down Syndrome Organization

Georgia
The Down Syndrome Association of Atlanta
United Cerebral Palsy of Georgia

Idaho
Eastern Idaho Down Syndrome Family Connect

Illinois
Gateway Down Syndrome Association
Supporting Illinois Brothers and Sisters (S.I.B.S.)
The National Association for Down Syndrome

Indiana
Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Indiana
Down Syndrome Indiana

Iowa
Northwest Iowa Down Syndrome Society

Kansas
Autism Society of the Heartland
Down Syndrome Innovations
Down Syndrome Society of Wichita, Inc.

Kentucky
Down Syndrome Association of Central Kentucky
Down Syndrome of Louisville

Louisiana
Down Syndrome Association of Greater New Orleans

Maryland
Down Syndrome Association of Maryland
Down Syndrome Association of Southern Maryland
Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County, MD
F.R.I.E.N.D.S.
Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
Melwood, Inc.
Parents of Children with Down syndrome of Prince George's County

Massachusetts
Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress
Massachusetts General Hospital Down Syndrome Program
The Arc of Massachusetts
Your Access Advocates

Michigan
Autism Alliance of Michigan
Down Syndrome Support Team
Michigan Parent, Advocate & Attorney Coalition (MiPAAC)

Minnesota
Arc Northland
Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota

Mississippi
Down Syndrome Association of Memphis & MidSouth
Mississippi Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
The Arc of Northwest Mississippi

Missouri
Down Syndrome Innovations
Gateway Down Syndrome Association
The Farmer's House

Montana
Open Door Advocacy

Nebraska
Down Syndrome Advocates in Action NE
Down Syndrome Alliance of the Midlands
Down Syndrome Association for Families

Nevada
Down Syndrome Connections Nevada

New Hampshire
ABLE NH
Community Crossroads

New Jersey
Down Syndrome Association of Southern New Jersey (DSASNJ)

New Mexico
Rio Grande Down Syndrome Network
The Down Syndrome Office and Resource Center

New York
GiGi's Playhouse Buffalo
Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York

North Carolina
Charles Lea Center Inc.
North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance

North Dakota
Designer Genes of North Dakota

Ohio
Autism Society of Greater Akron
Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio

Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati
Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Ohio
ElevateDD
The Arc of Ohio

Oklahoma
Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma
Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa

Oregon
Central Oregon Disability Support Network

Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
Down Syndrome Association of Delaware
The Arc of Pennsylvania

Rhode Island
Down Syndrome Society of RI

South Carolina
Aiken County Board of Disabilities
Charles Lea Center Inc.
Down Syndrome Association of the Lowcountry
Down Syndrome Families of the Midlands
Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board
The disABILITIES Board of Charleston County
Tri-Development Center of Aiken County, Inc.
United Cerebral Palsy of South Carolina

South Dakota
New Directions Down Syndrome Association
The McGovern Center for Leadership and Public Service

Tennessee
Charles Lea Center Inc.
Down Syndrome Association of Memphis & MidSouth
Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee

Texas
Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas
Down Syndrome Association of Houston
Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas
Open Door Advocacy
Texas Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
The Arc of Greater Beaumont
Rio Grande Valley Down Syndrome Association

Utah
Timpanogos Self Reliance
Utah Resources of Utah County Council (ARUCC)

Vermont
Vermont Environmental Justice Network

Virginia
Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia
L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C.
Melwood, Inc.
Virginia Down Syndrome Association

Washington
GiGi's Playhouse Everett
The Arc of Snohomish County

Washington, D.C.
Disability Rights DC
L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C.
Melwood, Inc.

West Virginia
Down Syndrome Network of West Virginia

Wisconsin
Down Syndrome Association of Minnesota
Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin, Inc.
DSAW - Central
DSAW - Chippewa Valley
DSAW - Fox Cities
DSAW - Green Bay
DSAW - La Crosse
DSAW – Sheboygan
DSAW - South Central
DSAW – Southeastern