

## United States Senate

March 10, 2017

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome. Established in May 2015, the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome is an expansion of the Congressional Down Syndrome Caucus originally formed in 2008. The goal of the task force is to promote bipartisan policies that further the understanding of issues important to individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

Down syndrome occurs when an individual is born with a full or partial extra copy of the 21st chromosome. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes an increased risk for certain medical conditions such as congenital heart defects, respiratory and hearing problems, Alzheimer's disease, childhood leukemia and thyroid conditions. People with Down syndrome also experience cognitive delays and intellectual disability. Down syndrome, which occurs in people of all races and economic levels, is the most commonly occurring chromosomal condition, affecting approximately one in every 700 babies born in the United States each year.

Improved medical care has contributed to increased life expectancy for people with Down syndrome. Just 30 years ago, the median age of death for an individual with Down syndrome was in their mid-20s. Now, people with Down syndrome are routinely living into their 60s and 70s. Quality educational programs, a stimulating home environment, good health care and positive support from family, friends and the community enable people with Down syndrome to lead fulfilling and productive lives. People with Down syndrome attend school, work, participate in decisions that affect them, have meaningful relationships, vote, and contribute to society in many wonderful ways.

Bipartisan leadership in Congress has resulted in significant achievements for the Down syndrome community and disability community at large. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) all stand as evidence to what can be done when Members work with each other to enact legislation that seeks to empower individuals with disabilities. Because of these laws, a generation of people with Down syndrome have had more opportunities to succeed and be an active part of our communities than the generation before them.

The mission of the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome is multifold and includes building awareness of the issues important to those with Down syndrome, such as medical care, education, job opportunities, and independent living. The Task Force also promotes medical research and bipartisan cooperation. We are committed to working to advance issues important to those with Down syndrome and hope you will join our efforts by becoming a Member of the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome today. For further information, please contact

Kyle Christian ([kyle\\_christian@moran.senate.gov](mailto:kyle_christian@moran.senate.gov)) with Sen. Jerry Moran's office or Megan Perez ([megan.perez@mail.house.gov](mailto:megan.perez@mail.house.gov)) with Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers' office.

Sincerely,

Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome Co-Chairs  
Senator Jerry Moran  
Senator Robert Casey, Jr.  
Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Representative Pete Sessions  
Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Representative Cheri Bustos