



February 6th, 2025

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes-Norton
2136 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry Moran
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congresswoman Holmes-Norton, Senator Moran, and Senator Peters

The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) empowers individuals with Down syndrome and their families by driving policy change, providing resources, engaging with local communities, and shifting public perceptions. We write today to announce our support for the Words Matter for the District of Columbia Courts Act which, if passed, would eliminate the use of the word “retarded” from Title 11 of the District of Columbia Code and replace it with the more appropriate term “intellectually disabled”.

The R-word” is derogatory and demeaning to individuals with disabilities and has no place in our federal, state, or district code. Unfortunately, this word is still present in Title 11 of the District of Columbia Code to reference individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Under the D.C. Home Rule Act, only Congress can make changes to Title 11. Therefore, Congressional action is necessary to ensure that the dignity of individuals with disabilities is upheld and respected. By removing this offensive word from D.C. code, Congress can ensure that the code utilizes more appropriate and respectful language when referring to individuals with disabilities.

NDSS strives to ensure all individuals with Down syndrome are assured their human rights and valued by a more inclusive society. NDSS proudly supports the Words Matter for the District of Columbia Courts Act for removing and replacing derogatory and outdated language. The words used by our government and in our laws matter in shaping public perceptions. We thank you for your leadership regarding this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kandi Pickard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kandi Pickard
President and CEO
National Down Syndrome Society