



October 10, 2023

The Honorable Robert Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

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 in support of the Federal Agency Accessibility Compliance Act which would strengthen Section 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act by requiring each federal agency to have a compliance officer that ensures website accessibility for individuals with disabilities. By amending this section of the Rehabilitation Act, federal digital media would be more accessible for individuals with disabilities, including those with Down syndrome, and broaden their access to federal information.

Currently, there is no enforcement to ensure that federal agencies are carrying out Section 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. As a result, many federal agencies have not made their websites equally accessible for individuals with disabilities. With the addition of compliance officers who specialize in website accessibility within each federal agency, federal agencies would be held more accountable to produce more accessible digital media.

According to the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging's 2022 report *Unlocking the Virtual Front Door*, roughly 90 percent of the Veteran Affairs websites did not fully uphold Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.¹ While the report conducted its study on the Veteran Affairs website, many other federal agency websites have also had Section 508 violations. This lack of compliance from federal agencies concerning digital accessibility has hindered individuals with disabilities from equally accessing federal information and programs.

NDSS strives to ensure all individuals with Down syndrome are assured their human rights and valued by a more inclusive society. We urge Congress to support the Federal Agency Accessibility Compliance Act to increase digital accessibility for those with Down syndrome and other disabilities, and 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 fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kandi Pickard
President and CEO
National Down Syndrome Society

¹ United States Senate Special Committee on Aging, Majority Staff. (2022). *Unlocking the Virtual Front Door*. Retrieved 2023, from https://www.aging.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/unlocking_the_virtual_front_door_-_full_report.pdf