February 5, 2018

Councilmembers of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmembers,

The National Down Syndrome Society, the leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome, strongly supports the passage of Bill 22-0154, the Disability Services Reform Amendment of 2017.

The passage of this legislation would end the mandatory civil commitment for people with disabilities to receive community-based services. This impedes on their basic freedoms and because individuals who are civilly committed are required to attend annual court hearings, judges make choices on personal matters such as their weight, diet, medical diagnosis and care. When these mandatory court dates end, people with disabilities will still have support from a family member or guardian through the Supported Decision-Making agreements this law would also enact. These agreements allow adults with a disability to make their own choices by using people they trust to help them understand the issues and their options.

We aspire to a world where people with Down syndrome are able to pursue their interests and dreams. Mandatory civil commitment hinders a person’s ability to make their own choices and research shows that people with disabilities who have more control over their lives will have better life outcomes. We want people with Down syndrome to have every opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life goals and become valued members of welcoming communities.

We hope that the District of Columbia will enact this bill and end the mandatory civil commitment.

Thank you for your leadership with regards to this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Ashley Helsing
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