BUDDY WALK ® TO END #LAWSYNDROME 2020
ISSUE BRIEF: Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome

Legislative Request

Please join the Congressional Task Force on Down syndrome.

- **Senate:** Michael Gamel-McCormick with Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) at michael_gamel-mccormick@aging.senate.gov or 202-224-4193, or Kyle Christian with Sen. Moran (R-KS) at kyle_christian@moran.senate.gov or 202-224-6521.

- **House:** Kristin Flukey with Rep. McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) at kristin.flukey@mail.house.gov or 202-225-2006 or Liam Steadman, with Rep. Cheri Bustos, at Liam.Steadman@mail.house.gov or 202-225-5905.

Background and Summary

Established in May 2015, the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome is one of nearly 150 informal personal interest Congressional Member Organizations. In general, these organizations focus on increasing public and Congressional awareness of issues, offer new solutions for addressing them, and attempt to influence the Congressional agenda.

The Task Force, which is bipartisan and bicameral (includes Members of the House and Senate) is an expansion of the Congressional Down Syndrome Caucus, which was originally formed in 2008 and only included Members of the House.

The Task Force works to increase awareness in Congress about Down syndrome and to promote bipartisan policies that further the understanding of issues important to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. It does so through various means, including letters to agency leaders, Member and staff briefings on topics of interest, and the dissemination of information about the value and acceptance of people with Down syndrome.

The Task Force has four co-chairs: Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Bob Casey (D-PA); and Representatives Cheri Bustos (D-IL) and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA).

Key Messages

- The Task Force convenes informational events for Members of Congress and their staff to increase awareness about Down syndrome and works to advance bipartisan solutions that seek to promote the value, inclusion and independence of individuals with Down syndrome.
Members of Congress are not obligated to vote a certain way – joining the Task Force just
indicates that they are interested in being supportive of the Down syndrome community and
are interested in being kept up-to-date on important issues affecting our community.

The Task Force regularly partners with NDSS to develop educational, medical and employment-
related initiatives that support and expand opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome.

EVERY Representative and Senator should be a member of the Task Force on Down syndrome –
this is an easy, non-controversial Ask!

**Answers to Questions about the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome**

1. **If a Senator or Representative was a Task Force member in the previous Congress, do they
   have to sign up again or will their membership automatically roll over to the new Congress?**

   House membership in the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome does carry over from one
   Congress to another. However, Senate membership does not, so those who were members in the
   last Congress need to sign up again.

2. **If the Task Force is informal and does not have any power or authority, why is it important
   that the Senator or Representative join?**

   Down syndrome issues span the lifecycle, from education to economic self-sufficiency, to
   community integration and employment, to health care and research. There is no other entity in
   Congress that can take a comprehensive and coordinated approach to public policies impacting
   individuals with Down syndrome. In addition, government agencies look to the Task Force as a
   barometer of support for people with Down syndrome when developing their programs, policies
   and budgets.

3. **What is the time commitment to serve on the Task Force?**

   There is no commitment other than to have a Senator’s or Representative’s name listed as a
   member of the Task Force. We would hope the Senator or Representative, and his or her staff would
   participate in as many Task Force activities as possible. But we understand that Members of
   Congress and their staff are stretched thin, and we appreciate any effort that supports the value
   and acceptance of people with Down syndrome.

**Resources**

Background on the Congressional Task Force on Down Syndrome, and a list of 115th Congress