



February 13, 2022

To Our Valued Colleagues:

Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County (DSNMC)

Family Resource Information and Education Network for Down Syndrome (F.R.I.E.N.D.S. of Frederick County)

Down Syndrome Association of Southern Maryland (DSASMD)

Parents of Children with Down syndrome (PODS) of Prince George's County,

We appreciated your time and the opportunity for dialog together to discuss your concerns regarding our pending name change. We share a commitment to supporting and providing resources to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. As part of that commitment, we want to ensure that all of our decisions support that shared mission.

As of February 14, 2022, the Chesapeake Down Syndrome Parent Group will become the Down Syndrome Association of Maryland. This decision has been the result of a long and thoughtful process and we are excited and humbled to be in a position to do more for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. It is indeed the result of the work of hundreds of volunteers in our community that shared a vision to reach more and more families in areas that did not previously have an easily accessible support network. We believe this name change best represents the growth we have already seen, the growth we hope to continue to see, and gives us the ability to provide more support to our community.

We recognize and celebrate the long history and valuable work of your organizations. We have discussed your concerns at length and as we move forward with our planned name change, we are committed enhancing our collaboration with you across the state, to share your event announcements and programming to reach a larger audience, and to clearly communicate the

independence of each organization as we continue to enhance the support to individuals with Down syndrome across Maryland.

We have no intention of representing ourselves as an umbrella organization. At your request, we are happy to provide a letter or any documentation that would clarify the distinction, to ensure it's clear to any stakeholders that you believe would have concerns. We know and trust your work will speak for itself. As we expand networking, education, and advocacy offerings, we know that local connections are at the heart of our Down syndrome community and we are committed above all, to help families make those connections. This includes sharing your organizations with those who would be best served by them.

We look forward to your continued support and partnership as we move forward together in our work to support individuals with Down syndrome and their families throughout the state of Maryland.

Together for Down Syndrome,

The 2021-2022 Board of Directors

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Lauren Ochalek, RN, MSN, and advocate, Chair: Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition