



February 6, 2024

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Braun
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Shaheen and Braun:

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 Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act which would direct the Small Business Administration (SBA) to designate a Coordinator for Disabled Small Business Concerns and collect data, on a voluntary basis, on the disability status of small business owners participating in programs at the agency.

Many individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities take pride in their work as entrepreneurs and small business owners or employees. In fact, according to a report from the National Disability Institute, individuals with disabilities are self-employed at a higher rate across all age groups than their working age peers without disabilities. This same report details numerous barriers to entry into the workforce and entrepreneurship as well as the impact that the absence of disability data has on this underserved population. The Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act would work to address both critical issues by building capacity for and better understanding the needs of disabled entrepreneurs.

From our partnership with Voya Cares® to provide grants to entrepreneurs with Down syndrome to our role as a founding partner of the CEO Commission for Disability Employment, NDSS know that supporting entrepreneurship is part of the work we do to ensure all individuals with Down syndrome are assured their human rights and valued by a more inclusive society. The Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act would be a critical step towards creating a more inclusive workforce for all.

We urge Congress to support the Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act 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 of the name.

Kandi Pickard
President and CEO
National Down Syndrome Society