



MARYLAND DOWN SYNDROME  
ADVOCACY COALITION

Adrian Forsythe y Korzeniewicz  
Public Comment  
Meeting of the Maryland State Board of Education, July 29, 2025

My name is Adrian Forsythe y Korzeniewicz. I am the co-chair of the Adult Workgroup for the Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition, and I work at TerpsEXCEED, a postsecondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the University of Maryland.

In elementary school, I was included in regular classes at my neighborhood school in Prince George's County. I had many, many friends who helped me. I won second prize at the Science Fair. I played soccer and participated in plays. My teachers were amazing. The IEP coordinator Anita BUY-UM had high expectations for me and for my teachers. She said I was going to be in the general education classroom.

When I got to high school, things didn't go so well. But at an IEP meeting my senior year, I told the team that I wanted to go to college like my brother. And I did. I went to George Mason University—Living Into Future Environments—LIFE Program.

I am here today on behalf of MDAC. I have with me, Samantha, Hope, Ellie, JoJo, Patrick, Luke, Sophie, Daniel, Caleb, and Dakota.

They are all students in Maryland's public schools. And they need your help because we are ready for change.

These students are important to their families, their schools, and their communities. They come to school to learn, to make friends, to prepare for postsecondary education, careers, and life in the community. And we know what they need to succeed in school.

They need their teachers and principals and other staff to believe in them and that they can learn, with the right supports in place and strong IEPs. General and special educators who have time to plan instruction together. And who know how to adapt materials, use evidence-based best practices, and utilize the power of peers.

We have provided you with stories from students with Down syndrome and their families from across Maryland. Some are stories of great successes—students who have been

meaningfully included in general education classrooms and have teachers who believe in them and who believe in themselves—that with some creativity and collaboration with a team, they can teach every student. But some are stories about the challenges too many students with Down syndrome face in Maryland. We need your help. We are ready for change.

We need high expectations, teachers and principals who are prepared to support them and have time to collaborate, and schools and systems that have the resources to help them succeed. We are ready for change. Thank you.