

NDSC Endorses Bill to Prohibit Transferring Special Education and Other Programs out of the US Department of Education

“The National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC) strongly supports H. R. 10232, the bipartisan bill introduced by Representative Mannion, Representative Fitzpatrick, and Ranking Member Scott that would block the administration from transferring the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), and the Office of Indian Education (OIE) to other Departments through interagency agreements or other means. It is critically important to students, schools, and states that these offices remain together at the U.S. Department of Education” (the Department) said Stephanie Smith Lee, NDSC Policy & Advocacy Co-Director.

This bill is the companion to S.5046, a bipartisan bill led by Senators Kaine, Collins and Murkowski that was approved by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in July.

NDSC urges Congress to keep the Department intact due to its unique responsibility to implement critically important federal education laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the expertise of its staff and technical assistance centers. In addition, collaboration among Offices at the Department is essential. Special education is part of the education system – not a health program – and it does not belong in the Department of Health and Human Services. Students with Down syndrome rely on strong federal oversight of IDEA and other education laws. Keeping special education expertise and accountability within the Department helps protect students’ rights and ensures states and schools are held accountable and receive the support they need.

We commend Representatives Mannion, Fitzpatrick, and Scott for introducing this important legislation and urge the House to pass this bill and other legislation prohibiting the transfer of the Office of Civil Rights and other department offices.