



March 9, 2026

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

On behalf of **Parents of Children with Down Syndrome (PODS) of Prince George's County, Maryland**, I write to express our **strong and urgent support for Senate Bill 863 – the Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act**.

As President of PODS of PGC, I represent families whose children depend on consistent special education services to learn, grow, and thrive. For too many families in Prince George's County, those services are inconsistent, delayed, or missing entirely. Senate Bill 863 is a critical step toward fixing these long-standing issues and restoring trust for families of students with disabilities.

This legislation will benefit the disability community in three critical ways:

First, it increases transparency and accountability. Families deserve to know whether their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) services are being delivered. Quarterly updates on service delivery, vacancies, and compensatory services will provide essential visibility and accountability.

Second, it strengthens oversight and long-term improvement. The independent audit of special education services will help identify systemic gaps and guide meaningful solutions to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Finally, it strengthens support for students who require one-to-one aides. Many students with disabilities rely on these aides to safely access their education. By requiring funding for full-time salaries and benefits for one-to-one aides, this bill helps stabilize a workforce that our students depend on every day.

Families in our community are not asking for special treatment—we are asking for our children to receive the services they are legally entitled to under federal law. Every missed service represents lost opportunities for learning and development that cannot easily be recovered.

For the Down syndrome community and the broader disability community in Prince George's County, **Senate Bill 863 represents accountability, transparency, and hope.**

I respectfully urge you to support and pass Senate Bill 863. Our children cannot wait.

Sincerely,

Opal Foster

President

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