

June 20, 2018

Pennsylvania State Assembly  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Senators,

I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends, an organization which provides services to families affected by disability across the United States. Our Joni and Friends offices in Lancaster and in Souderton, PA provide Family Retreats for Pennsylvania's special-needs families. Joni and Friends/Pennsylvania also trains churches as to how to embrace people with disabilities and their families.

In our programs, we see many children and adults with Down syndrome; these individuals with intellectual disabilities are considered a true blessing, not only to their siblings and parents, but to their congregations. The presence of people with disabilities always enriches a community's life fabric, underscoring that vulnerability and weakness is a prime platform for strength, joy, and love. As each special-needs individual exercises his gifts, he contributes significantly to the community.

It is why Joni and Friends/Pennsylvania stands firmly in support of the Down Syndrome Protection Act (HB2050). If passed, this historic measure will ensure the inclusion of children with Down syndrome, helping them to experience significant new protections. Under current law in Pennsylvania, a woman can obtain an abortion prior to 24 weeks for any reason (except to select the sex of the child); HB2050 would simply add Down syndrome to that provision in the current law.

The United States must not follow the example of other nations that are dismantling protections for infants and unborn children with Down syndrome, such as is happening in Iceland and the Netherlands. Please work toward the passage of the Down Syndrome Protection Act, as it will safeguard the lives of untold numbers of children with this particular disability. We want a society which safeguards its most vulnerable populations; a society that truly cares about those who are weak.

Yours in His care,



Joni Eareckson Tada