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NDSC CALLS ON SECRETARY DEVOS TO ISSUE GUIDANCE IN SUPPORT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

August 9, 2018, Atlanta, GA – The National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC) joined with other local, state and national organizations today to call on U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to issue new guidance clarifying that Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) funds may be used to support postsecondary students with intellectual disability (ID). [The letter](#) to the Secretary cites improvements in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) that authorized financial aid, new model programs and a National Coordinating Center (NCC) for students with ID and requires the new model programs to collaborate with school districts, including using IDEA funds, and with vocational rehabilitation agencies. Despite language in the regulations for both IDEA and the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) clarifying that such funds may be used for these students, current guidance is being interpreted in some states to prohibit such support.

NDSC Executive Director, David Tolleson said, “Issuing guidance to align the implementation of these important laws will create new postsecondary education and employment opportunities for students with intellectual disability and eliminate confusion in states that are denying services and funding.”

Higher education opportunities for students with ID, including students with Down syndrome, have dramatically increased since the passage of HEOA, with over 260 programs existing now nationally. The NCC evaluation of new model programs demonstrates a significant increase in employment after graduation. [A comprehensive report](#) from the Inclusive Higher Education Committee, *Addressing the Policy Tangle: Students with Intellectual Disability and the Path to Postsecondary Education, Employment and Community Living*, accompanies the letter to the Secretary. It outlines the legal and policy background and need to align the implementation of HEOA, IDEA, and WIOA to meet the Congressional intent to encourage postsecondary education and competitive, integrated employment for individuals with ID.

About the National Down Syndrome Congress

Founded in 1973, the National Down Syndrome Congress is the country’s oldest organization for people with Down syndrome, their families, and the professionals who work with them. A 501(c)(3) non-profit advocacy organization, the NDSC provides support and information about issues related to Down syndrome throughout the lifespan, as well as on matters of public policy relating to disability rights. The National Down Syndrome Congress is committed to creating a national climate in which all people will recognize and embrace the value and dignity of people with Down syndrome. For more information about the NDSC, please visit our website at www.ndscenter.org.

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