

February 17, 2025

Dear DSAIA Family,

I struggle to find the right words to express just how much this community means to me. DSAIA is more than just an organization it is a family. It is a collective of passionate, dedicated leaders who show up every single day to make a difference in the lives of individuals with Down syndrome and their families. Each of you brings a unique light, and together, we have built something truly special.

DSAIA has been instrumental in my own journey, shaping my career and connecting me with people who have become lifelong friends. It has been an honor to serve as your president, and I can say with full confidence that our board of directors has fought tirelessly over the past year to keep DSAIA moving forward. However, despite our best efforts, we have faced significant challenges. The rising costs of running the organization, coupled with a decrease in membership, have made it increasingly difficult to provide the high-quality services our members deserve.

At the end of the day, our sole purpose is to serve you to equip you with the tools, connections, and support needed to strengthen your organizations and your communities. That mission has always been at the heart of DSAIA, and it is with that mission in mind that we have made a difficult but strategic decision.

After much deliberation of our options, we decided to engage Jim Hudson, the new Executive Director of the National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC), to gauge if NDSC would be interested in DSAIA merging under the NDSC umbrella. Many of you know Jim due to his long-term involvement with DSAIA and the reputation he built as the Executive Director of the DSA in Cincinnati. Jim and the NDSC Board were interested and excited about our proposal, so our board made the decision to move forward with a merger between DSAIA and NDSC after the 2025 conference. This decision was not made lightly, and it comes after months of thoughtful discussion about how we can best ensure that our members continue to receive the support they need both now and in the years to come.

We know that change can be unsettling, but we also know that this transition will ultimately allow us to serve you better. As part of the merger:

- The Leadership Conference will continue, but in a new format, as a pre-conference to NDSC's Annual Convention in July 2026. Many of you have requested this change over the years, as it reduces travel costs and allows for greater participation.
- NDSC's larger staff team, including a Convention Director, will handle much of the logistical burden of the Leadership Conference. This will free up the Leadership Conference Committee to focus on providing the right programming to meet attendees' needs.
- A new DSAIA Program Coordinator role will be created within the NDSC Staff Team. This person will be dedicated solely to supporting our DSAIA community.
- DSAIA will maintain representation, with a designated leader from our network serving on the NDSC board to advocate for the needs of our members.

Our top priority in this process is to honor and maintain the integrity of DSAIA while developing a stronger, more sustainable framework to support you. We are confident that Jim Hudson and the NDSC team possess the experience, leadership, infrastructure, and vision necessary for a successful transition. Jim's proven track record in managing a successful DSA (Cincinnati), which involved his integration of the National Down Syndrome Network into the DSAGC and his long-term commitment to DSAIA, gives us great confidence that this move will lead to a future where we can serve a more significant number of members in a meaningful way.

While this transition marks a new chapter for DSAIA, it does not mark an end to our mission. Rather, it is an opportunity to grow, to evolve, and to ensure that we continue to empower Down syndrome organizations across the country with the tools and resources they need to thrive.

We are so grateful for each and every one of you. Your passion, your dedication, and your unwavering commitment to serving the Down syndrome community are what make this organization what it is. As we embark on this next phase, please know that we are doing so with your best interests at heart.

We will continue to share updates as we navigate this transition, and we welcome your questions, your feedback, and your thoughts. Most of all, we thank you for your trust, for your leadership, and for being the heart of DSAIA.

With gratitude and hope,

Christina
President, DSAIA