

**NC Down Syndrome Alliance Ribbon Cutting
Monday, March 21, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.**

Remarks:

- Good afternoon, all. I am delighted to join the North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance (NCDSA) in celebrating World Down Syndrome Day.
- Today we recognize our neighbors, our friends, our family members, and our colleagues who have Down Syndrome. We celebrate their diverse experiences and the talents they bring to communities across our great state.
- We know that individuals with Down syndrome are thriving members of our society. And, at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, we aim to do all we can to provide the needed social and healthcare supports to enable all to have a productive and meaningful life in the community.
- With the proper supports, we aim to empower individuals to achieve their full potential and live healthy, happy lives.
- With improved treatment and access to care, the life expectancy for people with Down syndrome has more than doubled in recent decades—from 25 in 1983 to 60 today; however there is still much work to be done.
- Today's launch of the North Carolina Down Syndrome Training Center here in Wake County is an important step as we work to ensure that all individuals with Down syndrome in North Carolina have access to a high-quality education.
- The Center will serve as a hub to connect families across the state, while offering virtual and in-person programming.
- Access to high-quality education programs like this unlocks the limitless potential of individuals with Down syndrome, and supports experiencing life's monumental milestones that we all cherish, like learning to drive, high school graduation, and later gaining meaningful employment.

- I commend organizations like NCDSA, self-advocates, families, and educators across the State who are working to promote awareness and research to enrich the lives of North Carolinians with Down syndrome.
- The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has taken significant steps to transform services and systems to support individuals with Down syndrome as fully included members of their communities.
- Access to meaningful employment is critical to achieving equal opportunity, full participation, and economic self-sufficiency for people with Down syndrome.
- The Department is committed to advocating for improved systemic change and policy in issues such as community inclusion and employment for adults with Down syndrome.
- And I welcome your partnership as we continue to design programs and advocate for policies that are transformational and equitable where all can thrive. There is more work to be done, and my heart and attention remain on this work. With collective partnership and continual community and stakeholder engagement, our community's potential is limitless.
- Thank you for being here today. I look forward to this initiative's success and am thrilled to see its impact in our community.