



NEWS RELEASE

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Special Olympics Hawai'i Delegates Made Case of Impact and Need for Critical Funding on Capitol Hill

HONOLULU – Special Olympics athletes, Program leaders, Unified partners, and family members from all 50 states and the District of Columbia converged on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. on February 13 for Special Olympics' annual "Capitol Hill Day." This was the first time in the 16-year history of Capitol Hill Day in which all 50 states were represented, honoring the organization's 50th Anniversary.

Representing Hawai'i were Special Olympics Hawai'i Neighbor Island Regional Director, Adrienne Laurion, Special Olympics Maui Athlete Matthew Wanderscheid and Special Olympics Maui Coach Aaron Swan. The delegation met with a number of representatives including Senator Brian Schatz and Senator Mazie Hirono.

"We were excited to receive a warm welcome from our Hawai'i representatives and to have the opportunity to share our passion for Special Olympics and building healthy communities. We believe that with their support we will be able to bring value to diversity and support for more education around individuals with intellectual disabilities," said Laurion.

Special Olympics athletes held more than 250 face-to-face meetings with members of Congress in both the House and Senate, challenging and inviting their elected officials to partner with them to achieve the goals of expanding Special Olympics Unified Sports and Unified Champion Schools programming and to end health care disparities and discrimination against the 15 million persons with intellectual disabilities in America by supporting inclusive health initiatives.

Special Olympics athletes, serving as self-advocates, educated lawmakers and their staff about the significant consequences that arise from the stigma and stereotypes faced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They described how that impacts their lives in the areas of sports, health care and education. The goals of Capitol Hill Day were to effectively convey the high impact and cost-effectiveness of Special Olympics' evidence-based programming that addresses these issues, to educate lawmakers and to secure continued support from legislators.

"No one can better articulate a vision for how America can become a more inclusive nation or demonstrate what it means to unite and come together than the athletes and Unified partners of Special Olympics" said Tim Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics. Shriver added, "Our athletes and youth leaders will lead us into the next 50 years of our fight to end discrimination for people with

intellectual disabilities, but we can't do it alone. We need governmental support to preserve laws that guarantee the rights and full participation and integration of people with intellectual disabilities into our society."

For more information on the Special Olympics Hawai'i please contact 808-695-3524 or visit www.sohawaii.org. Also, follow Special Olympics Hawai'i on Twitter at www.twitter.com/sohawaii, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsHawaii, and on Instagram at www.instagram.com/sohawaii.

About Special Olympics Hawai'i

Special Olympics unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports every day in Hawai'i. Through work in sports, health education and community building, Special Olympics is addressing inactivity, injustice, intolerance and social isolation by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities which leads to a more welcoming and inclusive society.

Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics Hawai'i has grown from a handful of athletes to more than 4,700 participants across the state. With the support of more than 11,500 coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics is able to deliver 10 Olympic-type sports and more than 45 competitions throughout the year. There is never a fee for any athlete or family to participate in Special Olympics programs. For more information on Special Olympics Hawai'i, please visit www.sohawaii.org.

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is a global movement that [unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports](#), every day around the world. We empower people with intellectual disabilities to become included and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all. Using sports as the catalyst and [programming around health](#) and education, Special Olympics is fighting inactivity, injustice and intolerance. [Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver](#), the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 5.7 million athletes and Unified partners in [172 countries](#). With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers [32 Olympic-type sports](#) and over [108,000 games and competitions](#) throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners. [Click here for a full list of partners](#). Engage with us on: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [our blog on Medium](#).

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