



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT
PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA 96799
Telephone: (684) 633-4116 | (684) 633-4121

PROCLAMATION
DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH
MARCH 2025

WHEREAS, the theme, "Together We Can," is a participatory action that allows the disability community to tell their own stories and make choices to fulfill their quality of life through a collaborative effort in American Samoa;

WHEREAS, Disability is a natural part of the human experience and does not diminish the right of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, and participate fully in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of our Territory;

WHEREAS, Words have power. The word 'special or special needs,' 'handicap,' and 'mental retardation or retarded' and Samoan terms *such as e le atoatoa or manaoga faapitoa* are inappropriate terms that lead to harmful action, discrimination, abuse, negative stereotypes, and violence. The official Samoan translation of disability is *A'afiaga Tumau*. The appropriate term, when relevant, is a person with a disability. Recognizing the person first before the disability will change our perspective on opportunities for all. American Samoa will move towards maintaining each individual's dignity and respect by emphasizing the person instead of the disability.

WHEREAS, Education is fundamental for human, social, and economic development, fostering the fullest potential of an individual with disability. Recognizing students with a disability educational excellence will contribute to society in a meaningful manner. American Samoa will move towards a coordinated effort to achieve academic excellence amongst people with disabilities in education and college readiness.

WHEREAS, Employment for people with disabilities prevents social exclusion and contributes to a diverse and inclusive workforce that broadens perspectives and experiences in the workplace. Successful inclusion policy and partnerships will lead to coherent actions to remove barriers. American Samoa's commitment to transform a thriving community to ensure disability employment will contribute to good jobs and economic growth.

WHEREAS, Health services and treatments amongst the disability and aging community are limited due to limited accessible transportation, physical access, and awareness and knowledge in regards to the disability, leading to health inequalities. American Samoa will ensure health policy reform is responsive to meet the needs of the disability and aging community to ensure equal access to healthcare that promotes person-centeredness.

WHEREAS, it is the commitment of the American Samoa Government to provide people with disabilities the opportunity to pursue meaningful and productive lives and thrive in a fully inclusive society.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Pulaali'i Nikolao Pula, Governor of American Samoa, do hereby proclaim the month of March 2025 as Disability Awareness Month in the Territory of American Samoa, and call upon our people to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed my signature and the seal of my office on this 25th day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-five.



PULAALI'I NIKOLAO PULA
Governor